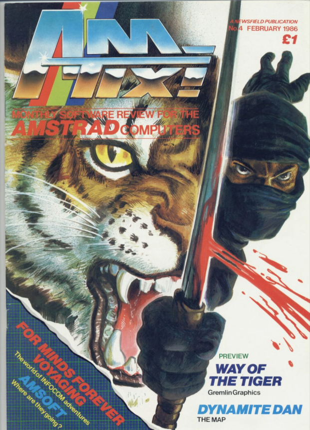


AM-TIX!
A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
No 4 FEBRUARY 1986
£1
MONTHLY SOFTWARE REVIEW FOR THE
AMSTRAD COMPUTERS
FOR MINDS FOREVER VOYAGING
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PREVIEW
WAY OF THE TIGER
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A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION

Cover by Oliver Frey

ISSUE 4 February 1986

SPECIALS

37 AMSOFT VISIT
A trip down the M25 to find out what Amsoft are up to, and why? There's some good news as well

74 GREMLIN GRAPHICS VISIT
The Master Muppet makes it just in time to see how Gremlin Graphics are faring with their latest masterpiece — THE WAY OF THE TIGER

92 THE CHART THAT COUNTS
The very first AMTIX! chart. Your chance to set the record straight — and boast a little too

PROGRAMS FOR THE NEW YEAR

16 BARRY McGUIGAN'S BOXING
The thrill and fury of Boxing, but without the blood and sweat

18 NIGHTSHADE
Set free the population of Nightshade, the village, and become the Ultimate hero

28 SWEEVO'S WORLD
A first glimpse of the World's dumbest, intelligent robot. Another fine mess to get yourself out of

32 ELITE
The ultimate space strategy game finally docks with an Amstrad. We venture inside and find out what all the fuss was about

AMTIX! COMPETITIONS

40 WIN A CRAZY DAY OUT
In the Mastertronic cartoon-strip challenge

63 BIFF, BANG, WALLOP
Fifty copies of Activision's latest duff em up, BARRY McGUIGAN'S BOXING on offer. Test your boxing knowledge

86 YIE AAAAR
Fifty more fighting games up for grabs, this time courtesy of Imagine. It's YIE AR KUNG FU they're giving away

91 DESIGN A BADDIE
Gremlin Graphics are offering comfy sweatshirts as prizes in their WEST BANK competition. Make sure you try to win one!

THE MAIN HEADINGS

7 EDITORIAL

8 ON THE SPOT
The trials and tribulations of the Amstrad World come to light as the OTS team sift through another batch of your correspondence

11 NEWS
The AMTIX! crystal ball gets a dusting; everyone's buying and selling. Themselves

47 AMTIPS
Robin Candy turns his cartographic attention to the Mirrorsoft hit, DYNAMITE DAN, together with some other ungentlemanly hints, tips and POKEs

53 ADVENTURES OF AN UNTIDY DESK
Mr M tries to find his towel now that his favourite games have arrived from Infocom. After much ado, and absolutely no help at all from 'The Guide', Sean takes the part of Mr Dent — and a few more besides

64 RESULTS
We reveal the lucky prizewinners produced by the competitions in Issue One

71 LETTERTECH
Got a problem? Need some technical sympathy? Write to Lettertech . . .

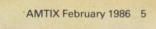
76 AMTECH
CPM Jones looks at some Public Domain business software. We have an exclusive peek at the the most advanced music system to beat its way into an Amstrad. Cassette loading problems? we offer some advice. Garry Liddon concludes his look at ROM based BASIC utilities

88 STRATEGY
From deep inside the AMTIX! HQ, the man is discussing strategy and playing soldiers. This month THE WAR GAME gets the full treatment while a reconnaissance is done on Lothlorien's WATERLOO and AUSTERLITZ

95 THE TERMINAL MAN
Continuing the adventures of the hardware hero

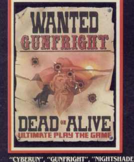
Still brainless? Make sure of your copy of AMTIX! Issue 5. It's in the shops on 20th February

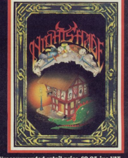




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ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME



FASTER, GO FASTER

Well Happy New year and welcome to what promises to be a glowing New Year for all Amsters. Every indication is that 1986 will be the year that Amstrads, the world over, shed their Spectrum chains. Sounds a little overdramatic? Perhaps, but as a self-respecting Amster I have grown weary of the Spectrum hand me downs, the game conversions that, in many cases, are not even up to the original's standard.

Of course we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that 1985 was the Amstrad's first full year, and while Amstrad are busy thinking up the next models, software houses are changing their attitude to the machines which already exist. Activision have said that the only machines they now consider worth working on are the Commodore 64 and Amstrad. Other software houses are putting a lot more effort into the games that they write for us. The idea of writing a game for the Spectrum and later shoving it onto the Amstrad, is fast losing its appeal. The result is that we are beginning to enjoy games that are a darn sight better than their Spectrum equivalents. Programmers are now making an attempt to exploit the Amstrad's assets to the full. Look at Gargoyle Games. Their first two games — *Tir Na Nog* and *Dun Darach* — are just about on par with the Spectrum originals, but they run slower. But Gargoyle's latest game, *Sweevo's World*, is significantly better than its Spectrum relation because it is more colourful and FASTER. Not many moons ago programmers were telling me that it wasn't possible to get the same sort of speed out of an Amstrad as you could out of a Spectrum. I think that myth has been laid to rest with the appearance of games like *TLL* and *Starion*. *TLL* is an interesting example, its publishers, Vortex, could have turned out a simple conversion and sold a few thousand copies. They — wisely — decided against that. Instead they went to considerable trouble to exploit the Amstrad and allow us a glimpse of what it can do.

Of course one of the reasons we have had to endure the vast range of sub-standard games was simply that there were so many Spectrum titles around when the Amstrad appeared — and many of those had hardly pleased Spectrum owners, what better way to recoup than to convert them for unsuspecting Amstrad owners? The Amstrad was the salvation of many a software which possessed a few old successful Spectrum titles in the cupboard as well. All they had to do was dust them down a bit and ride on the back of the reputation formally gained. Well the conversions have been done now, apart from a few waiting in the wings. The trend nowadays is for a games concept to be put together and the writing to sub-contracted to a number of different teams. That is how *Yie Ar Kung Fu* came about (remember that the Amstrad version was the first to show).

And what a result. Forget the Spectrum version, the only thing I am waiting for is to see how the game compares to the Commodore version. Even Amsoft have finally twigged that the market has matured and that we won't be palmed of with any old rubbish. They are working on an exciting series of games that should set the Amstrad disk-based machines apart from the crowd. If *Tank Command* is anything to go by then we are in for a treat. Amsters expect the best — in 1986 we are going to get it.

THE BOLT-ON NEW YEAR

If there was one thing that Amstrad tried to do right from day one that was to ensure that their range of machine shared a reasonable degree of compatability. There are games which will not run on all three games machines, but it simply isn't Amstrad's fault. They have never failed to give software houses every indication as to what they should or should not do within programs to maintain compatability. Those software houses who either ignored that advice or even failed to seek it in the first place have suffered — and so have we. There seems to be an unacceptable trend amongst publishers to simply mark their packaging 'AMSTRAD' or 'AMSTRAD 464' in the hope that those whose machines are not specified will be prepared to take a risk.

When it comes down to hardware compatability the situation seems to be getting worse. I am not referring to the little irritations caused by 464 boxes not fitting onto a 664 unless you bend the power cables and jack the machine up on a box. Hardware manufacturers have not been taken into Amstrad's confidence in the same way as software folk. Well that's one problem of incompatability but there's another looming. This is the one that will result from the ever growing range of bolt-on goodies. A little example. CP/M is a standard operating system? No. Amstrad CP/M is standard to Amstrad and we can cope with that. But now the much praised DK'tronics ROM packs have forced us to ask the question, 'will this CP/M Plus program run on my machine with a ROM pack on the back?' Worse is to come. We are going to be offered all manner of goodies, 1 Megabyte five and a quarter inch disks, MSDOS upgrades, hard disks with so much space you could spend a life time filling it and much more. It all sounds great — but take care. Comaptability isn't just a nice word, within limitations it's essential. Without it the market begins to fragment, manufacturers find that they have to cope with more and more variations; their costs go up and the user has an increasingly difficult task trying to match product to system.

Have a very happy new year.

SOFTWARE REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

Title	Publisher	Page
Aladdins Cave	Artic	23
Barry McGuigan's Boxing	Activision	16
Creator	Public Domain	82
Doors of Doom	Amsoft/Gem	25
Elite	Firebird	32
Grumpy Gumphrey	Gremlin Graphics	24
Hi-Rise	Bubble Bus	43
Nightshade	Ultimate	18
Rembrandt	Beebug Soft	86
Runes of Zendos	Dorcas	54
Seas of Blood	Adventure International	55
Souls of Darkon	Taskset	53
Spitfire 40	Mirror Soft	42
Sweevo's World	Gargoyle	28
TLL	Vortex	20
The War Game	Relax	88
Winter Games	Electric Dreams	44
Wriggler	Romantic Robot	34
Zorro	U.S Gold	35

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

Amtix! Mail Order 68, 69
Amtix! Subs Offer 66, 67
Ariolasoft 45
Arnor 80, 81
Back Numbers 89
Design Design 15
Domark 65
Elite Back Cover
Firebird 4, 62
Gargoyle 46
Gremlin 36
Imagine 30, 31, 94
Incentive 49
Lightwave 13
Melbourne House 21
Microbyte 25
Micronet 70
Ocean 2, 3, 22, 73, 99
Odin 61
Siren 10
U.S. Gold 27
Ultimate 6
Vortex 85

THE MONTHLY SOFTWARE STAR FOR YOUR US GOLD CALENDAR

Have you seen our super **US Gold Calendar Offer** in the last issue of AMTIX!? We joined forces with US Gold to help you plan your way through a brighter year of software. Last month we gave you a six month calendar in which each month contained a **Red** and a **Blue** star. Between now and June, we'll be printing one **Blue** star in each issue of AMTIX! (there'll be two in the June issue to complete the first six months). Cut out the stars and affix them in the appropriate places on the calendar. US Gold are printing **Red** stars, on some of their games packages, and if you collect a US Gold title a month, you can cut out the **Red** stars and stick them on the calendar as well. When the six months are completed, just follow the instructions on the calendar and send it into US Gold at **Unit 10, The Parkway Industrial Centre, Heneage Street, Birmingham B7 4LY** to receive a free game. Then there'll be another six months calendar with stars to collect! Watch out for an exciting Software 86 with your US GOLD/AMTIX! Calendar!



Welcome to the fourth issue of AMTIX! (the Amstrad mag that gives you forth in its second). The postbag has now built up to the point where it really keeps the OTS team on the go, so please ensure that you address your letters correctly (see bottom of column), and also make sure any seriously technical letters/problems etc go to the AMTECH heading. This saves confusion with the post sorters. If you have a technical letter, you can enclose it together with an OTS letter, but make sure they are on separate sheets please!

After wading through the printed replies, it was decided to award the coveted Letter of the Month and the £20 worth of software to this one . . .

DISKGUSTING

Hi Spot,
I have just finished reading issue two of AMTIX! I missed issue one because when I saw it on the shelf I thought it was something to do with MSX computers. Anyway my single green shield spent, gave me something of good value for a change, keep it up.

Right then I have several things that I would like to get off my chest. Firstly I have noticed that many games are being offered on disk and tape formats, indeed many are being offered on disk only. We are all told that disks are better than a tapes because it loads faster and is easier to load. But two things occur to me. Firstly that the old claim that cassettes were never intended to store data is a load of rubbish. What do the whizz kids and boffins think that music or speech is — right, a form of data, after all large computers centres use large tape reels to store data on. I first thought that it was the disk manufacturers who were pushing us to use disks. Now I think that it's like of people like Amstrad supplying machines that are complete with their own drives. It would seem that Amstrad are offering the same deal as Henry Ford, you can have any colour so long as it is black. Will it mean in the future that you can have any computer that you like but you must have the disk drive (at a price)? The main bug in the system is that we are all going to end up paying an extra £5 for the same game but on disk. It just doesn't add up, we all the know the price of disks. Commodore 5" disks cost about a pound and Amstrad 3" cost around £2.50 in quantity. How do software houses justify the extra £5? Something smells.

Many thanks for the short and sweet AMX mouse, at last now I know what it looks like but why didn't you show its underneath, surely it's its feet that do the walking?

Why do magazines, including AMTIX, assume that all those who buy it are some sort of super wizz kids who understand all the computer jargon. Spare a thought for the less well advanced, we want to learn that's why we buy magazines. Why don't computer people employ people who are not super whizz programmers etc?

Thanks also for the RS232C review, it taught me a little more than Amstrad's mail shot. Can anybody tell me how long I can leave my VDU/Power supply switched on before it burns out. Amstrad don't give any guidance.

Lastly with regard to the comments from Mr Fox (or is it Master Fox?) in his letter speaking of the large number of eye catching graphics. Does he really feel that pictures make this type of magazine? Does he read the articles or only look at the pictures? Perhaps Terminal man is included for the people who don't actually read, but prefer to look at pictures. My view is that the pages should and could be used for better more informative things. Never mind I will continue to buy and READ AMTIX!
Mervyn Pugh, Wigan

Amstrad, like Mr Ford, are simply responding to a what they see as a demand in the market place, a demand for complete computer systems with disk drives, lots of people think they are right, I am sorry that you don't. There can be no doubt disks are a far better way of storing computer code, the only drawback is the cost. I can assure you Mervyn, that if there was no price difference then you would never see another cassette game again.

As for the price difference, the exaggerated difference is caused by mark ups. The software house charges the distributor more for disks, who in turn add a percentage mark up and pass that on to a retailer who also sticks his percentage on. If you work it out like that you can see that it isn't just game price, plus the cost of a disk.

As to the mouse, of course we didn't show its underneath — that would have been rude.

I really can't give you a precise answer to your query regarding your VDU (Visual Display Unit to the non-techno wizz kids), except that the power supply does seem to be very reliable. However don't leave the screen picture on for long periods of non-use, it can cause an image to be burnt into the coating. If you don't want to turn the computer off just unplug the signal lead from the back of your computer. And as far as pictures are concerned it's true what they say — they're worth a thousand words.

And returning to the subject of disks . . .

OTS

DISC DISKOVERY

Here's one to put you on the spot!
Why do you insist on spelling the word D-I-S-C as D-I-S-K in AMTIX!? You're always referring to **disk**-based programs and **disk** drives etc. Amstrad themselves call it a disc and so does every advertiser in your pages. So why do you go against the grain, or is it just to sound transatlantic? Perhaps you think it makes you sound a bit Ameri can, cool and clever. As far as I am concerned it is just a silly affectation that irritates me and stops my full enjoyment of reading an otherwise interesting and pretty decent Amstrad mag.

C'mon, let's have some decent old English.
John Remy, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands

Interesting! But first, why do you spell it P-R-O-G-R-A-M and not (as in decent old English) P-R-O-G-R-A-M-M-E? Everyone knows a computer program is spelt with one M at the end, because that's the way the Americans spell the word. Popular computer awareness arrived via the Atlantic (like it or not) and the spelling stuck. This is fine for us decent old Brits, because magazines can now distinguish very neatly between a (computer) PROGRAM and a (television/radio) PROGRAMME, the very spelling of the word telling the reader which is which without further qualification. Very economic use of language. The word DISK is a similar situation. You see DISK is a shortened version of the American word DISKETTE (Discette or Disckette just looking silly and untechnical). Therefore it is strictly correct to spell it D-I-S-K and not D-I-S-C. Again, this allows us writers to distinguish (in decent old England only) between a (computer) DISK and a (recording) DISC or (compact) DISC. We're helping to enrich the decent old English language, John.

OTS

NEWSBOY'S ADVANTAGE

Dear AMTIX,
Since I started work in a news agents I have been able to read most of the computer magazines in publication. When I read issue one of AMTIX! I thought great, at last, a decent magazine for my Amstrad. As soon as I read issue two I was dismayed, disillusioned and angry etc. I am writing to complain about the things wrong with AMTIX! and a lot more things beside.

Complaint number one.

I think that you are completely and utterly biased in favour of Amsoft software. An example of this is *3D Grand Prix Driver*. How on Earth did it get 84% for playability and 85% for graphics? For a start trying to negotiate your way past the other cars is like trying to negotiate you way past a brick wall. That should bring the playability down to 50% or less. I don't think it is possible to get chunkier graphics or more badly scrolling than these. And to think that Amstrad is using it in their advertising campaign — couldn't they have used something like *Scorcery* or *Highway Encounter*?

I also have a couple of messages that I would pass on I hope that you don't mind? First to Mr Sugar. Tell those idiots who write software for you to write something original for a change and not just do conversions from the Spectrum. Go on admit it, *3D Grand Prix* was an attempted conversion of *Pole Position*.

Second for Mr Sugar. I notice that Commodore seem to be slagging off the Amstrad in their adverts, the one with the scales. So hit back and get an advert in the paper with something like 'well at least and Amstrad doesn't look like a shoe box'.

To Firebird. When you finally release *Elite* please, please don't use Lenslok. My friend who owns a pocket calculator called a Spectrum, spent three hours trying to get the game to start.

To most software houses.



What is the point of turbo load games, they do not stop pirates, they only cause loading problems. People, buying these games take them home find that they can't load them and discover that the retailer will not exchange them.

Finally to AMTIX! As I said before I read a lot of magazines including CRASH and ZZAP. Buying AMTIX! means that I am paying a pound for rubbish that has been regurgitated from the other two. Anyway AMTIX! is still by far and away the best computer mag for the Amstrad, so keep up the good work.

See your comments in AMTIX! I hope.

Shafqat Rasul, Scotland

PS Can I just say hello to Stuart and all his dogs, horses, cows, chickens and the sheep called David.

My My, what a moaner, an Amster should be a happy fellow. As for us being biased in favour of Amsoft you have got to be joking — they give us a hard time and we do them no favours. It's just a simple case of your not agreeing with our reviewers. It isn't fair to say that the scrolling was bad and the graphics chunky because it simply isn't true. As for the game play, well motor racing isn't very easy you know. Just to help you on your way here's a little tip to end your frustration. When you are actually racing press ESC once then hold down TAB (or is it CTRL?) and type in ARTWORK. When Mr Candy reads that playing tip in here he's going to throw a wobbly so I hope you're grateful.

As for your messages to Mr Sugar I would rather you passed them on personally, it's safer that way, though not for you. But before you do read the bit about Amsoft in this ish, they really seem to be turning over a new leaf.

I am sorry to hear about your friend and Lenslok, but if you really to become elite you are going to have to cope with a lot more than that. We can't recall any problems with Lenslok for the CRASH reviewers. Lastly, I am sure that the readers of CRASH and ZZAP! would resent you referring to some of their material as rubbish. The Amstrad market has benefited a great deal from Spectrum conversions so it's reasonable and inevitable that AMTIX and its readers will do the same.

Now cheer up and Hi to David.

OTS

A SPOILED EFFECT

Dear AMTIX!

I recently purchased an Amstrad 464 from a well known chemist. They advertised the machine by saying that you received over £100 pounds of free software. I thought this sounded quite good as it included twelve different titles.

I bought the computer, rushed home and quickly loaded up one of the games. What a disappointment! It's hardly surprising considering some of the titles included *Bridge-it* which received an abysmal 10% in your overall rating; *Oh Mummy*, 29%; *Sultan's Maze* which is slow and boring and looks as if it might have been written in BASIC and only got 27%. The only one worth considering is *Easi—Am* a small word processor.

But why do this? Why not give away a couple of really good games rather than all this rubbish? Is it just so they can say they're giving away over £100? Well, I think it's a con! Anyway, keep up the great mag.

Lewis Spooner, Loxwood, West Sussex

It certainly does spoil the effect, but you can't really complain that 'it's a con' — after all, the 'chemist' was going by the retail value of the software included, and whether they were any good or not, you did actually get it effectively free with the machine. Let's be honest, surely it's the Amstrad you wanted, not just a software bargain? High Street retail chains, however, are always on the look out for what they call 'cost points'. This simply means putting together the largest amount of extras items at the lowest possible extra cost to themselves, to encourage you to buy the object that is really for sale.

OTS

CHART PLEASE

Dear OTS,

Thanks for the magazine at long last. After reading a friend's CRASH every month, I can only say you lived up to my expectations. May I make a few suggestions that could (if that's possible) make the magazine better. How about a chart like the one in CRASH and a high score table. I'll start things off. Here's my high score table for *Yie Ar Kung Fu* — 2,389,940.

Justin Leahy, Eltham, London

The chart starts in this issue, and as you'll see, we've tied it in with high scores, so hopefully that will please you.

OTS

MORE COMPATABILITY GRUMBLES

Dear AMTIX!

Thank you for bringing out an excellent publication, it makes a worthy trio with CRASH and ZZAP! 64. Although we might not always agree with your ratings your reviews help us decide which games to stock and which to give the elbow.

Anyway down to business. We are running into compatability problems when loading games on the 6128. Could I suggest that you review all games on the 6128 and mention whether they work or not. This would save a great deal of time dealing with disillusioned customers who assume that they have a faulty tape. We try to check games ourselves but there isn't always time and the manufacturers certainly don't make it clear.

The second point concerns publishing solutions to games. So far you are not too guilty of releasing solutions within weeks of a games release. I can't think of anything more infuriating than buying a game only to be informed exactly how to complete it within weeks of release. So please try and leave a few months before releasing the solutions. I get a lot of feedback on this point from customers and most of them endorse my view.

Best of luck for your magazine in the future.

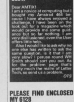
John Anderson, Long Eaton Software Centre, Nottingham

I can see that this is a topic that just isn't going to go away. We take notice of the alleged problem and we would like very much to take your advice. Problem; not enough 6128s. Instead our Cameron the camera, a guy who really knows where his towel is, uses a 6128 to do the photography. Every game gets photographed so that should catch the bad guys out. Funny thing is there really don't seem to be that many, see Amtech for an idea as to why. Perhaps you could help, John, send us a list of the games that you don't think are compatible and we will check it and then publish it for all to see.

Your point about the software manufacturers is valid. It's about time the software producers gave proper and relevant information on their cassette/disk inlays.

I agree with your comments on game solutions, it's a fine balance between giving enough to enhance people's interests and giving the game away. However, each tip/poke etc, is clearly headed in Amtips, so the solution, surely, is to look only at those you wish to see. This way we also manage to please those who are genuinely stuck early on, and those who like that aspect of gaming more than the game playing itself. Poker Robin would be the last to ruin anyone's fun.

OTS



MORE HELP FOR THE SLOW

Dear AMTIX!
I am a novice at computing but I bought my Amstrad 464 because I have always enjoyed a challenge. I have been on the look out for a magazine which would provide me some guidance but so far nothing. I am very disillusioned, even the *User* offers little help.

Also I would like to ask why no one else has written to ask the same question, is it that I am very slow? I peruse round WH Smith should sort you out. As for the problem page that's pretty much the realm of Letter Tech, so send us a problem.

OTS

PLEASE FIND ENCLOSED MY 6128

Dear Harassed Ones,
I write to you on my shiny new 6128 to congratulate you on your new magazine. As a fan of CRASH I was taken both by Oliver Frey's artwork and the interactive atmosphere than you manage to convey. Even though I no longer have a Spectrum I still buy CRASH and pass it on to my father who is a sixty year old Speccy games nut.

Although I have few, if any, criticisms of your magazine I would like to make one point. Despite Amstrad's assurances there seem to be a lot tape based games for the 464 that will not load into a 6128. It would be helpful to those like myself who enjoy games as well as serious applications if you could manage to make a note of this fact in your reviews.

Keep up the good work.
Keith Jenkins, Ross-on-Wye

Next time you write Keith could you use paper like everyone else, the postman had a very hard time trying to get your 6128 through the narrow hole in the door. We promise to tell you when we find a game that is incompatible across the range. You should have a peep in Amtech as well.

OTS

HELLO TOSH WANNA BUY AN AMSTRAD?

Dear AMTIX!
Having had a 464 with a DMP-1 for over a year, I recently sold both items to a friend and bought a 6128 with an Epsom printer. Needless to say I am more than pleased with my new equipment, as my friend is with his Arnold — he a had an Atari 800 before, which he also bought off me. I am presently looking for a word processor and spell checker so until I find one it's back to the good old Biro and paper. I feel really spoilt for choice, when I had my Atari and although the stuff that was available for it was of a pretty decent standard it was always expensive and difficult to get hold of. Arnold re-awoke my interest in computing.

I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw AMTIX! in WH Smith, *Amstrad Action* had only just become available. All four Amstrad mags are of a pretty high standard. However, I am placing an order for AMTIX! with Smiths while *Amstrad User* comes free from the user club. These two magazines should give me everything that I need from user magazines. I would like to get my hands on a copy of AMTIX! number 1 because I missed it when it was in Smiths. I want to keep up with the CP/M articles in particular. I would be grateful if you could tell me the address and cost so I can get a copy.
Bryan Francis, West Hampstead, London

You are turning into something of a mini computer retailer, perhaps you should take it up full time! Anyway thanks for the kind words. You'll be glad to hear that a copy issue one is only £1.25 (inc postage) away. Just write to Carol (Auntie Aggie) Kinsey, AMTIX Mail Order and she'll sort you out. Back issue ads should be appearing from next issue on — it takes that time to sort out what we have ion stock.

OTS

SUSPICIOUS MINDS

Dear AMTIX!
I bought your the November issue and I was really chuffed with it. I found it to be very good value for money and the Artwork brilliant. The same is true for the December issue. I thought the reviews were great but the thing I loved best about the issues where the competitions, I love them.

However looking through the mags I became very puzzled. After all of those competitions and I can't find a page telling who the lucky winners are. It could be me not looking properly but I have checked each issue several times and I can't find anything.
To be truthful with you I am beginning to think that it's all a fix so scrap the comic strip at the end and list the names of the winners instead. Even despite that complaint yours is still a great mag.
Ronnie, Blackpool
PS You will think I've got a real cheek after what I have just written, but if I do win the software then I would like *Yie Ar Kung Fu* and *The Boss*.

Not only have you got a cheek but you've got a very suspicious mind as well. We probably forgot to make it clear that competition winners not only had to win the individual comps but they had to find the result page as well, so you lost for sure. Na! just pulling your leg. We have to allow plenty of time for the entries to come in and then they have to be sorted by the Competition Chimp and that takes a long since the chimp was dividing his time between us and the local Zoo. Now, I am glad to say, we have his undivided attention and you will find the results from issue one in this issue. As for your prize, well I'm not going to tell you if you won one or not, so there.

OTS

A MUM'S CONFESSION

Dear AMTIX!
You have killed my worries, dead. My Mum has just confessed to secretly buying me an Amstrad 6128 for my Christmas. Previously I owned a scaffy PLEKTRUM. So you can guess that I don't know much about Amstrads yet. Can you use 664 and 464 games on a 6128? I think there is something called a simulation tape which allows you to.

Will there be many more good games coming out soon? Please do more reviews on games which can claim the Accolade. Have a top thirty software chart. More colour please and bigger titles. Grade the hardware. Maybe you could have a top ten or twenty for books and/or hardware. Keep the fantastic work up please.
Robin Carey, Corstorphine

I am sorry about your worries, you were obviously very attached to them, but are you sure it's fair to blame us? Nine times out of ten this sort of thing is due to overfeeding. Your mother's a bit of a sneak isn't she? still at least she has taste.

The vast majority of games run on all machines but you don't need any sort of simulation program. You had better have a look in Amtech as well. And don't worry about the games, there are going to lots and lots of them, and we will tell you about them all.

OTS

That's it for this first issue of the New Year. If you have any points to make, grievances to air, points to award on subjects ranging from AMTIX! itself to the role of the 6128 in universal affairs, write to the OTS team: ON THE SPOT, AMTIX! MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB. See you next month!



NEWS

RISING IN THE STATES

Firebird are really beginning to spread their wings. After several weeks of rumours and counter-rumours, suspicions and firm denials (the sort you leak to the press when you want to tell them somtheing may be Up), the British Telecom owned software house has bought out **Ultimate**. Not only have the managed to buy the biggest 'cult' software house in the business, right from under the nose of another major software house, but now they are hitching up their pants ready for a major offensive on the American market. The target machines are the popular US micros; like the 64, Apple II, Atari ST and IBM. This is an interesting move because the UK has always found it very hard to make any impression on the American computer scene. Even the Amstrad has so far failed to get them all leaping about shouting 'The British are coming . . .' We'll show 'em — one day.

A RUBBER OF AMSTRADS

Bridge players will be pleased that **CP Software** have announced the imminent release of their 'excellent Bridge program' (their words, not ours) *Bridge Player 3*. Converted from the Spectrum program of the same name *Bridge Player 3* features strong bidding and play of cards, post mortem facility with reviewing, rebidding and replaying, ability to input your own choice of hand, bias the deal, peep at opponents hands and claim the rest of the tricks. There is also full on-screen information during the game. If that's the sort of program that really gets you excitied then you can rush out and buy it early in the new year either on cassette (£12.95) or disk (£14.95).

LET THEM EAT CAKE

Beau Jolly, the compilation kings, are now confident that they can get hold of enough 3" disks to satisfy the expected demand for their *Computer Hits 6*. The disk is going to sport *3D Starstrike*, *Chuckie Egg*, *Guardian*, *Killer Gorilla*, *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *The Covenant*. All that for £14.95. They now rekon to have got their hands on 20,000 disks. We really don't understand all the fuss. There simply isn't a disk problem, Amsoft have told us that — there are over a million of the things here in the UK — it's just that they aren't too sure exactly where.

EEEEEAAAAAAAWWW!

English Software have decided to convert their Atari program *Elektra Glide* to the Amstrad. What is it we hear you cry, after all, nobody reads ZZAP! 64, where it was previewed. We-e-e-ll, it's an incredibly fast 3D race-game which features tunnels, forks in the road and weird obstacles, like balls and cubes on the blacktop. It's all very speedy on the Atari and has very nice graphics indeed . . . we'll just have to see how it comes out when it's released during February!

ROCKMAN MOVES BUT STAYS STILL

The other hot news this month after the sale of Ultimate, is the sale of *Amstrad User*, the official Amstrad rag, to a **Database** connected syndicate. You may know that Database Publications already have an Amstrad title, *Computing With The Amstrad*. Why do they want another? Well there would seem to be a number of advantages in aquiring it; exclusive news of Amstrad activities, residence in the building, a few pages of guaranteed advertising, Mr Simon Rockman (its editor), sales of the mag to Amstrad for passing round the user club as well as host of other intangiables. All this for a mere £130,000 (rumoured, not certified).

WE WANT NODES

For those of you with friends (equiped with Spectrum or 64), you may have seen a smart little game called *Nodes of Yesod* from **Odin Computer Graphics**. Now this should have been an Amstrad game many moons ago but Odin have suffered from personnel and technical problems; with the result that Amsters are *Node*less. Not a lot of fun. I sincerely hope that the delay is not being exacerbated by Odin's little contratempt with a new software house called **Alphabatim**. They have a game called *Robot Messiah* which, Odin alledges, infringes the copyright of Odin's game. This situation arose because the chap who does all the work in the Odin game — Charlie Fotheringham-Grunes — allegedly appears in Alphabatim's game, 'Pixel for Pixel', say Odin. How so? Well one of the owners of Alphabatim is an ex-employee of Odin. It's now a matter for the courts to settle since Odin are seeking legal redress. In the meantime we are still without *Nodes*.



SPACE ACTION PLUS

Coming your way soon from **CRL** is a brillant new 3D space game which even caused Gary Liddon to leave his lunch (a previously unthought of possibility). *Tau Ceti* (Tow as in 'towel' Seety — unless you prefer your Latin classical, in which case it's 'Cheety') is a game where you zoom about a planet of the star Tau Ceti in search of the main reactor and when you find it, shut it down. You see, Tau Ceti has fallen under the control of robots and you're the person who has to save the day! It's potentially one of the most exciting releases yet, so keep your eyes peeled. By the way, there'll be two versions, *Tau Ceti* on cassette and *Tau Ceti Plus*, a disk version which has a lot more depth than the former.

FAST ALWAYS GETS ITS MAN

It seems that **FAST**, The Federation Against Software Theft, is beginning to do its thing. Early one December morning, Bob Hay, the FAST enforcer, led a team of men into 'a premises' and removed 250 alleged pirate copies and one very miffed shopkeeper. The shopkeeper has since been released on bail while the evidence and the man are investigated. This is the first FAST raid but we hear that it will be the first of many more. Someone should write a game about it — or perhaps a fast moving, all action telly series.

HEADROOM, MAN OR A GAME?

Television has always fed off itself — quiz games based on your knowledge of telly programmes and so on. The ultimate incest would be a telly quiz game based on your knowledge of telly quiz games based on telly programmes. Now computer games are headed the same way — it was inevitable that the game of the man (thing, machine or whatever) was bound to appear sooner or later. The man (etc) is the beloved, slick **Max Headroom** — Channel 4's (and the world's) first computer generated star. The software house involved is **Quicksilva** and they tell us that they intend to release an Amstrad version in late January. The game sounds as if it might be connected with the film 'Twenty Minutes into the Future' because, in the game, the player takes on the role of a computer program, dealing with all sorts of problems including two nasty assassins called Mahler and Breughel. In the meantime Quicksilva are working to finish *Yabba Dabba Do*, the Spectrum and Commodore versions of The Flintstones game are already out on the streets.

DK FAILING WHERE AMSTRAD FAILED?

An anonymous little note has found its way onto Jeremy Spencer's bit of the shelf. Apparantly it was left by a little Balaclav-ed man sporting a pair of Hunter wellies. It wittered on about the implications of the DK'tronics memory add-ons. There do seem to be some moderately unpleasant mutterings about DK's failiure to help purchasers secure a copy of CP/M plus. The little note mentioned that a solution is within DK's grasp. It seems that there is a company that has a CPM looka/workalike that would fit the bill and keep all of the punters happy. The cost of this alternative operating system could be a mere £15. Perhaps if a few people showed some interest DK might take up the cause. It would be a shame if DK'tronics passed this chance by in the same way that Amstrad shunned the DK memory expansion, and thus missed the biggest PR coup ever.

I COUNTED THEM IN . . .

To coincide with general Brit Bashing in the United Nations, **PSS** are releasing their game *Falklands 82*. The player assumes the unenviable role of the British Falklands field commander. All of the action takes place on just the one screen, a map of the islands, but there are a number of animated events. The advantage of this game is that the happenings of 1982 will still be fresh in most stratetgists' minds, so it might be interesting to try a few different tactics and see what the press have to say. The player will almost have the full complement of units to play with, but don't try anything on with 22nd SAS, they are a mean bunch.

Perhaps the next strategy game that PSS might consider could be a simulation concerned with how to keep our allies from saying nasty things about us in the UN? *Falklands 82* should be coming out from under cover late January.

I, OF THE AMSTRAD

Soon to be available on the Amstrad is *I, of the Mask*, a CRASH smashed, sooper-doops, very weird 3D arcade adventure. Written by **Sandy White**, author of the classic *Ant Attack*. You have to seek out and assemble different parts of a giant robot. It all sounds jolly exciting and there'll be a review as soon as we can get our grubby mitts on a copy.

AMSTRAD NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR SINCLAIR'S PROBLEMS

I am sorry to gloat but the world is not so rosy for the likes of Sinclair and Commodore. Uncle Clive poked his head round the corner and muttered something about a little loss amounting to some £18 million pounds. Sinclair's line is that the losses have very little to do with competition from the likes of Amstrad, because Amstrad were only just begining to show during the period that the figures relate to. Sir Sinc. even goes as far to say that 'Sinclair Research had fared better than its nearest rivals, British or American, in the home computer industry.' Apart from the simple fact that Sinclair lost nearly as much as Amstrad made, tempts one into thinking that Sir Clive could be mistaken. Whilst it is true that Sinclair's loss was made in a slightly earlier period than Amstrad's profit, much of the loss is due to a de-valuation in the stocks held by Sinclair. In effect, by writing down the value of their machines Sinclair are admiting that they are not worth as much in the market. A conclusion forced on them by the emergance of value-for-money Amstrads.

Despite the gloom, Sinclair's financial affairs look a little healthier than those of Commodore. Just to make sure that their new machine gets off the blocks, they have announced promotional deals; £50 trade in for your 64 or a free tape deck if you trade in any other computer. Could the offer be acceptance of the fact that owners of the revered 64 are not going to be a lot better off with the 128 version? After all, the increase in cost is not justified by the addition of CP/M, unless you really need CP/M — in which case you really need an Amstrad.



BOLT ON AN IBM, OR A FLIGHT OF FANCY?

The rush to supply bolt on goodies for Straddles is turning into something of a stampede. A German company, **Vortex**, has been doing very well, thank you. That company produces a wide range of bits from extra memory boards to MSDOS add-ons. However Vortex hasn't had it all its own way. Not very long ago the company was jumped on from great height by Amstrad and Schneider when they breached copyright by copying the CP/M 2.2 BIOS in one of their products. That little problem has since been sorted out, so Vortex think, but rumour has it that not everyone is satisfied. The point of that little tale is that the Vortex products are going to find their way into the UK via a company valled **Screens**, who should have all on display at the THE show.

Other products include a 32K intelligent (it corrects spelling mistakes as the words are sent to your printer) printer buffer, BASIC language extensions and a hard disk setup for about £400. The MSDOS board is designed to make Straddles think IBM (Ugh), but the program that is widely regarded as a reasonable test of compatability — the IBM *Flight Simulator* — doesn't run. However *Lotus 1-2-3* and *Dbase III* do, but they aren't nearly as much fun.

PAULA PLAYS MELBOURNE'S NEW GAME

The hairy footed ones have been growing restless of late. Amsters haven't had to endure quite the wait that other micro users have suffered, because they were introduced to Melbourne's *The Hobbit* so much later. Nevertheless angry mobs have been seen camped outside Melbourne Towers. Well the little Melbourne cutie, **Paula Byrne**, has told us time and time again that the follow up, *Lords of the Rings*, will be appearing on the Amstrad any minute now — and would we go and quell the riots. Sounds pretty fair. But recently Paula has been engaged on a little adventure game of her own. First she sent CRASH copies of the game, complete with magnificent book and two cassettes. Fine so far. But AMTIX's Sean Mastermup pet and ZZAP'S own adventure thingy knew that they might get a hands-on any minute. In anticipation they have both been crouched — open mouthed — by the letter box, ever since. Paula thought it would be a bit of giggle if she sent copies of *Lord of the Rings* to aformentioned personages. The result being that every morning for the past week, little packaes arrive from Melbourne House. Much damage and injury resulted from the frenzied dash to open packets and gape at contents — only, every time it turned out to be yet another SPECTRUM VERSION. Come on Paula, we really can't cope with this any more. Send us the Amstrad Version or we are going to camp outside your magnificent palace.

BP — ANNOUNCES NEW RANGE OF COMPUTER TITLES

Newstar — the company run by a man whose initials initially remind one of a petrol station — **Bill Poel**, has announced that it does take the 6128 seriously. So much so that Bill is issuing an improved version of *Newword*, Newstar's much improved *Wordstar* (which in itself must have been an improvement of something else). The new beefed up version will allow users to define key functions while in the program, rather than having to dive into CP/M Setkeys and risk getting your hands mucky. But the most important change is that the user can now edit the printer routines and cut out the superfluous codes that drive all those exotic printers that you may never even have heard of. The result is that 6128 users will have 90K spare on a single disk drive. That neatly sidesteps our only major criticism of the system when we reviewed it last issue. 8256 users will also benefit from this pruning since the shorter files can all be squeezed into the RAM disk allowing the whole system to be easily booted up almost as conveniently as Locoscript itself.

Newstar has also managed to sign up with **Compsoft** in a deal to supply their very powerful relational database. The price has been fixed at £99, quite an improvement on the original asking price of £560.

Another little coup is the VNPE (very nearly plain English) spreadsheet *Plannercalc*, which will be available for £39. *Plannercalc* has a big brother called *Masterplan* which will cost £99 but that comes complete with 50 applications already set out for you.

UTOPIA BOO-BOO

For those who've read our *Utopia* review and have thought that it's a mite too expensive will be well pleased with the news that you can now buy the chip only for £29.95. There have also been some additions to the ROM which weren't available at the time of review, principally the graphics dump which allows you to dump the whole screen to Amstrad DMP 2000 printers and most EPSOM compatible printers.

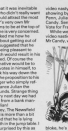
MORE WHEEEEE, SPLAT (GENTLY)

And yet another update on how the AMTIX!/CRASH/ZZAP! Dr Barnardo and Action Group charity parachute jump is progressing. C'mon people, we need your votes to push some of our staff out of a high-flying plane — they want to go — they really do . . .

I suppose that it was inevitable that those who didn't really want to jump should attract the most votes. ZZAP's very own Mr Rignall seems to be at the top of the list and he is very concerned. When he asked me how he should go about getting out of this mess I suggested that he should try being pleasant to people which would result in his being ignored. Of course the easier alternative would be to send a few votes in himself, to try and work his way down the list. He put the proposition to his bank manager who simply refused to advance Julian the necessary funds. Strange thing was, the very next day we had some votes from a bank manager, for Julian!

Franco Frey, The Newsfield technocrat, is more than a bit disappointed that he is lying only eleventh in the jump table. I am a little surprised by this as Franco writes quite a lot for all three magazines, mostly on graphics packages, so he really deserves to considered. Someone at the last ZX Microfair really put his finger on Franco's problem, when he declared that Franco 'was a really nice guy'. The voting trend seems to be for the Newsfield equivalent of a video nasty, hence the strong showing by the likes of Gary Penn, Julian Rignall and Robin Candy. Send a nice guy aloft — Vote for Franco.

While we are on the subject of video nasties that reminds me of Mr Candy, who in truth is a good



bloke, he's just misunderstood. There seems to be something of an ego battle being conducted between Messrs Candy and Mangram. Each of them see the number of votes as a measure of popularity. This has naturally put Lloyd in a very difficult position, he isn't keen to allow his frail body to be ejected from the back of a Hercules. He is, however, just as determined not to be shown up by 'that little jumped up poke person'. The CRASH Editor Graeme Kidd seems to be attracting more votes than he bargained for, so many in fact that the worried man was caught actually trying to edit the jump table. I have now taken steps to ensure that the table is kept where Graeme can't find it, on his desk.

The software industry continues to donate prizes. Among the latest contributors are **Ocean**, **The Hit Squad**, **Incentive** and **Micromega**. The boys from Micromega, Neil Hooper to be exact, sent us a superb letter and what must be World's most awful joke, so appalling in fact we feel that it would be irresponsible to print it. We can, however, make it available to anyone daft enough to want to see it — for a mere five votes a read. And yes Neil, we would like to hear the one about His'n'Hercules. The **Ram Jam Corporation** have promised to send us a bumper box of prizes and a respectable block of votes. A sudden burst of generosity perhaps? Well not entirely, it seems AMTIX!'s Sean Masterson has upset them. Ram Jam, far from being a bunch of wallies, quickly calculated that sending a substantial number of votes for Sean would be a lot cheaper than paying the train fare for their heavy mob to come all the way up from London. Smart.

Even John Edwards, the client liaison person, has collected a vote! As yet I have been unable to track down the source but suspect that it may have come from an advertising agency, if so, send more. The Army would be truly grateful of the opportunity to test the lift capacity of a civilian-laden Hercules. I can think of no better way than by sending John, Graeme Kidd and Gary Liddon.

Remember, whoever you chose as a victim, never forget that every penny you send will go towards making a handicapped person's life easier.

This months voting recommendations:
FRANCO FREY because he's daft enough to really want to do it, and **GARY LIDDON** because he thinks he's man enough to.

Next month we shall publish, for the first time, the Jump Table so far together with the pleas and excuses of the top six.

I want .... to jump out of a very high-flying Hercules (He or she may use a parachute at their own discretion)

I enclose a donation of £ ..... (minimum of £1.00) and no coins please. We get charged for receiving them.

I am frequently known as ....

and can be reached at ....

...

Postcode ....

SEND YOUR VOTES AND LOOT (NO COINS!) to:

WEEeeeee SPLAT! PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB

THE COMPETITIONY BIT

Name three flight simulation games

(1) ....

(2) ....

(3) ....

In fifteen words or less, using your skill and judgement and a pen, complete the phrase below in the most apt and original way:

I WANT JEREMY SPENCER TO JUMP BECAUSE

....


FORBIDDEN PLANET
Design Design
2112 AD
AMSTRAD £7.95
Selected Design Design titles are available from:-
WOOLWORTH
WHSMITH
COMET
John Menzies
Boots
and all leading software stockists, or direct from:-
Design Design Software, 125 Smedley Road, Cheetham Hill, Manchester M8 7RS
Trade enquiries:– 061 205 6603
Price includes p & p

BARRY McGUIGAN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING

Activision, £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Machine: all

You might reasonably take exception to the idea of inviting Mr McGuigan out for a bout of fisticuffs, but that's exactly what Activision expect you to do in this boxing simulation. However, you can seek comfort from the fact that the computerised McGuigan isn't going to leave you covered in bruises — perhaps just a little concussed.

The chance to take on the champion only arises when you have defeated eighteen other guys, all of whom want a crack at the title themselves. Each of the other fighters have their own personalities, their own individual strengths and weaknesses. If you don't want to fight the computer's men you can opt for the two player mode in which your opponents are controlled by the second player. Either way, before you can set off on the long road to fame or ruin you need a man of your own. Activision have spared you the hours of trudging round the East End searching dark and dingy gymnasia for a bit of class. You can design your own.

Now there are certain elements about a boxer that give him the potential of being a champ. The design stage enables you to program the combination that you think is best. You can select the race of the boxer, the colour of his hair or shorts and his personality (ranging from 'nice guy' to 'loud mouth'). Most of all you must decide on the fighting style you want your man to adopt. He could be a 'dancer' who 'flies like a bird and stings like a bee' or you may prefer a 'slugger', in which case he will probably just get stuck in and start bashing his opponent with little finesse but with devastating results.

As soon as you have got your man signed up it's time to pick a fight. You can start of in tenth place if you reckon your man is up to it, or let things take their natural course and start from the bottom, challenging one of the two boxers immediately above. Because each contender has his own personality you find that each progressive fight is harder than the one before. With this in mind you would be well advised to study the 'form' of your opponent and learn about his image, stamina, attitude and favourite punches etc. Your next task is to train your fighter paying special attention to the other boxers strengths. The amount of training that you can fit in depends on how many weeks you have before the big day. Whatever happens concentrate on the exercises that narrow the gap between the two boxers' abilities. If the other boxer is more agile than yours ensure that your man gets plenty of time on the light bag. Likewise you might want to build up stamina in which case the emphasis should be on road work. Once you have allocated the training time it's on with the gloves ready for the fight.

The venues are always well attended by an enthusiastic and noisy crowd. From your own seat you have a view of the entire ring in which the boxers have complete freedom of movement. At the top of the screen are the names of the contenders flanked on either side by the value of each fighter's endurance. Underneath you are kept up to date with the round number and the time into each round.

Throwing punches is what this game is about, and you have five varieties in your arsenal. The hook and uppercut are nasty nose jerkers, effective while the boxers are close together, or 'inside'. The jab is used while the boxers are further apart but the cross and body punches are bone crunchers at either range. The punches and movement are controlled either via the key board or with a joystick. Since the punches vary according to the distance between the boxers, the fire button is used to switch between the different modes. With the fire button depressed you can deal out the 'inside' punches, and released you are delivering the longer blows. Mastery of defence is the key to keeping your face in good order. Your fighter goes into 'auto-defence' when the joystick is centred, fending off body blows. While your man is 'inside' he needs to fend off head shots so use the cover-up defence is used.

During a round the endurance of each of the fighters is constantly updated. When endurance falls below 10 a couple more blows floor a fighter. If he is knocked out for the count then the fight is over but if he is knocked down three times in one round then, no matter how quickly he gets up, he loses on a technical knockout. Each punch thrown scores points so in the event of there being no knockout the result is decided on points alone. At the end of each round you are given full details of the condition of each of the fighters. The endurance, strength, stamina and even the reaction of the crowd should give you an indication of which strategy to adopt in the next round. Will you just keep trying for a knockout or wear the other guy down and go for a points win?

In this game winning is everything, only a victory adds to your purse and places you a little further up the list of contenders. The ultimate goal is to challenge Barry McGuigan and claim the world title as your own.

CRITICISM

1 **Not only is this a better designed simulation it is the best executed boxing game yet. The ability to 'design' your own player adds greatly to the intrigue of the game. Each of the contenders really do respond in different ways so that also adds depth to game that could have just been left as a simple punch up. The graphics are well up to standard and the designers have added some small, but nice touches to the ringside action. Even if you are only vaguely interested in boxing then this game should be given every consideration.**

2 *Barry McGuigan Boxing* on the Amstrad is really good and one of the best sports simulations I've seen to date. Apart from the actual boxing sequence itself, all the other stages make it a real fight to get to the heights of World Boxing and finally take on the World Champ himself (which I don't think I'll be doing for a few days yet). The idea of designing your own boxer is really original. It means that YOU can beat everyone and not make (eg) Frank Bruno do it for you. The music is some of the best I've heard on the Amstrad for ages. The colour is really well used, with lots of it too. The control of the boxers is good, but I only wish it was possible to have both players use a joystick in the two player game. The action in the boxing itself is very intense with the crowd shouting louder



when lots of punches are being laid in, the cameras even flash when somebody gets flattened. This is definitely worth buying, I would recommend it to anyone and everyone. Puts *3D-Boxing* through the canvas any day.

3 *Barry McGuigan's Boxing has got to be one of the best sports simulations on the Amstrad. The game is highly playable and has great depth with the facility to create your own boxers and select the training for each fight. Battling your way through the ranks of contenders, before being able to get a shot at Barry himself, is not such a unique idea but it works well because each of the other boxers do vary in ability. The graphics are excellent with very large, well-animated characters. I like the effect of the flashbulbs which go off round the ringside when a boxer is KO'ed, and there are other neat ideas like the crowd which roars madly after a particularly violent tete-a-tete. It knocks the other two boxing games for six.*

Presentation 91%
Good choice of options, all of which are very easy to set up.

Graphics 92%
Cleverly designed with plenty of wit.

Sound 81%
Three jingles to get you bopping and the crowd sound is great.

Playability 91%
More than just a sports simulation it's a way of life.

Addictive qualities 89%
The large number of opponents and the ability to design your own should keep you weaving for a while.

Value For Money 88%
One quid over the odds but you will be well satisfied with the result.

Overall 93%
We could say KNOCKOUT — but we resisted it!



NIGHTSHADE

Ultimate, £9.95 cass
Machine: All

Nightshade is a village. Not a quaint, pretty, tranquil village. It used to be — before the plague. The plague reduced the population of the village to a fraction, and those that remained were rendered helpless by the sickness, famine and despair. Easily they fell victim to the evil powers of an overlord who enslaved the populace to bid his will. A once proud people are now marked by the plague and disfigured by the evil power. No man could recognise them as anything else but the horrifying hideous beings that they have become. What was once a kind and loving monk has now become an evil creature who's evil deeds are only surpassed by his new, grotesque features. A once a quiet and meek washer woman has been transformed into a vile and vitriolic being.

That was all a very long time ago but legend has it that the village of Nightshade is still in the grip of evil, and still inhabited by hideous beings. The word is that many adventurers have tried to rid the place of evil, some may even have scored victories against the powers. One thing is certain — not one of those brave fellows ever returned to tell their tale. The legend lives on and no one can be sure just how much truth there is in it. But you intend to find out. An old man has told you the legend and even where the village is but he knows nothing else — that is for you to discover once you are within the enchanted village's walls.

Once inside you see yourself clad in armour looking like something out of *Knightlore*. Around you stands the beauty and splendour of a medieval village. The ancient stone walls, the superb wooden houses and the quaint little shop fronts. But don't spend too long enjoying the sights, very soon you will be set upon by all manner of nasty



and destructive creatures. Since you have no idea how to deal with any of them it would be wise to run.

Nightshade differs from previous Ultimate games in that the screen does not flick from one scene to another as the character moves from room to room. Instead a technique called Filmation II allows multi-directional scrolling from room to room although the 3D perspective is never lost. To prevent your view of the action being complicated by the building's walls they disappear whenever they are likely to obscure your view and are replaced with white lines — to prevent you bumping into walls which would otherwise be invisible.

Running is fine but it's rather a negative reaction. There are a number of 'antibodies' to collect. They vary in shape to signify that different antibodies are effective against different nasties. It's very hard to discover which antibodies you should find for a specific task because some of the nasties are very hardy and take a lot of killing. Other creatures can divide leaving you with two smaller targets. Some, upon being shot, are reduced to a mass of quivering animated jelly which is just as determined to persecute you in its new form as it was in its old shape. The antibodies are collected by passing over them and are transferred to a tube on the side of the screen. But the tube can only hold twelve 'shots' so you find yourself continually gathering extra ammunition.

Being attacked is unpleasant but contact with a nasty isn't so good for it either — it vanishes in a puff of smoke but it takes a third of your life with it — signified by a change in the hero's colour. You begin the game with just five lives so keep a check on your supplies of antibodies.

What the legend doesn't tell you is exactly how to rid Nightshade of the enveloping evil. We have managed to piece together some scanty information to the effect that the evil is vested in four creatures; the monk, the skeleton, the ghost and the Grimreaper. You will know them when you see them; their likenesses are carried on the bottom of the screen. Quite how to deal with these forces you will have to find out for yourself but there appear to be four very powerful antibodies in the shape of animate objects. Find these and use the correct one against the evil powers. That done you will have rid Nightshade of its horrible occupation — then it may even be worth buying a house in the place and settling down for a well earned rest.

CRITICISM

1 **Amstrad owners are fortunate to have the prettiest versions of Ulti mate's games given Straddles's ability to accommodate a little more colour. Thankfully that adds greatly to the game since the graphics are much more attractive than those found on the Spectrum version. Filmation II works very well, if a little slowly at times. The movement around the game area is very effective and quite absorbing, the animation of the man and the other creatures is brilliant. The instructions are typical of Ultimate in that they tell the gamer nothing, so little in fact one could be forgiven for thinking that the game element was very small. There is a task — one that is going to take quite a lot of cracking.**

2 This game has every appearance of being another Ultimate block buster. The graphics are superb and free from flicker. The game allows the use of both keyboard and joystick but the latter took a little getting used to and tended to be a little unresponsive. At first I had great difficulty getting into the game because I just wasn't sure what I was meant to do. It wasn't until all became clear that I really began to enjoy the whole experience and settled down for long hours of play. *Nightshade* does not have quite the adventure content of *Knightlore* but this is a very different game that is both graphically rewarding and challenging — if only a little obscure.

3 Nightshade *is a 'film' adventure where the player wanders around the game area collecting all sorts of wonderful objects and killing off nasty beasts. The object in this game is to lift the veil of darkness that has enveloped an ancient village. Not that the instructions make the what or the how very clear. The graphics and animation are very realistic, especially the buildings. The sound is used well and it manages not to be obtrusive. On the whole the game is very enjoyable and the graphics rewarding but I can't help feeling that the instructions really could have given a little more away.*

Presentation 85%
Nice package and comes with free head cleaner but the loading instructions were incorrect.

Graphics 92%
Very colourful. The Filmation II is both innovative and effective.

Sound 75%
Mostly just spot FX but these are well done.

Playability 87%
A very playable game if a little frustrating until you know what you are at.

Addictive qualities 92%
Attractive and demanding enough to keep you interested for a long while.

Value For Money 85%
Expensive but the free head cleaner and quality of the game mitigate that to a large degree.

Overall 91%
Well worth adding to your collection.



TLL

Vortex, £7.95 cass, £13.95 disk
Author: David Aubrey-Jones
Machine: All

The last Vortex title to titillate the Straddles's screen was *Highway Encounter*. That game was written by Costa Panayi who also devised the scenario for *TLL*. The Spectrum and Commodore versions of *TLL* have been around for a very long time but it is the last Vortex title to be converted. Why the delay? Well, instead of allowing a straight conversion, Vortex decided to rewrite the game to use the Amstrad's capabilities to the full. To this end they enlisted the help of David Aubrey-Jones who is blessed with the ability to make Straddles scroll — smoothly and at great speed.

Once you learn that *TLL* stands for Tornado Low Level the subject of the game becomes apparent. A Tornado (for the very few who don't know) is a swing wing multi-role combat aircraft — the teeth of the RAF. Your task is to pilot this hunky piece of kit around the skies eliminating targets, ideally without pranging the aircraft.

This is not a flight simulation, you control the aircraft from 'the outside' only having to worry about up, down, left, right, faster and slower. The only instruments for you to cope with are those displayed on the side of the map; fuel and weapons levels. The game is made up of a series of missions which must each be completed within a set time. The time available is also displayed on the map page. The map shows the features of the terrain and the disposition of the targets, it is shown to you each time you prepare for take off or whenever you press 'M'.

Getting airborne is pretty straightforward, the main trick is remembering to lift off before you run out of tarmac. Once aloft you can appreciate the 3D perspective to the full. From your oblique bird's eye view, looking down on your Tornado, you you see the relative heights of buildings, trees, cliffs and huge flag poles. The 3D effect becomes even more apparent when you start doing the clever stuff, like flying across people's lawns or under bridges. To judge the height of your aircraft look at the shadow it casts on the ground, once that is no longer visible you are at minimum height — one notch lower and you start pushing up daisies. Flying at these very low levels isn't just flash it's essential. The bombs don't need to be dropped so much as actually stuffed into the target from a very, very low level.

Now this low level stuff is pretty hairy so its a good idea to stay as high as you can for a long as you can, altitude brings its own rewards. When the aircraft reaches its maximum height it pulls its wings back and shoots off at a great rate of knots. The land below passes at such speed you can fly from one end of the game area to the other in just a jiff. There are still dangers though, since a few objects poke up above the rest of the landscape just waiting for you to run into them. The giant flag poles are particularly unpleasant and the idiot that built the tower block alongside the runway should be shot.

The object of each mission is to locate and destroy five targets which look like Polo mints. Since the playing area is relatively small you will find some of the targets are always very close to the airfield. The difficulty comes not so much in finding the things, which is made easy by using the map, but more in actually getting to them. The nearer a target is to buildings or trees the more difficulty you experience finding a safe approach. Not only have you got to be at such a level that the grass below bends, but you have got to be pixel accurate when you release your bomb. When you score, the target explodes under your aircraft. More often than not inexperience or sloppy flying results in either running out of bombs or fuel but you can always return to the airfield and top up ready for another crack.

Each mission requires the destruction of five targets. If you manage that then you move onto the next mission which is more difficult since the targets are placed in more awkward positions. Still it was not for nothing that the Tornado crews beat the Americans this year in a bigger, more expensive version of the same game. The aircraft is OK — it's all down to the pilot.

CRITICISM

1 **Vortex claim that *TLL* is the game by which others will be judged in 1986. I can understand why they would want to make such a claim — *TLL* has scrolling the like of which you have never seen before. Not only is it multi-directional it is very smooth and unbelievably fast. The control feels perfect and very realistic. From a technical point of view this game is faultless. My only reservations are that more should have been included in the game play. The game area is a little small, the targets are a little dull, though getting at them certainly isn't. And what unbelievable fun this would have been if there had been enemy aircraft in the skies with whom one could indulge in what would have been very thrilling air-to-air combat. But, that said, for the price this game has to be bought — you won't regret it.**

2 There's no escaping that the scenario of the game is a little dated but the techniques used to achieve some of the effects are truly state of the art. The scrolling is very fast and smooth. The sea is particularly effective (except on the green screen. Its a shame that the game didn't allow a green screen option). A lot of effort has gone into creating this superfast 3D movement but although the overall effect is good the graphics do tend to look a little blocky. I found it very difficult to judge the height of your aircraft as compared with pylons or even buildings. An easy game to get into that should provide endless hours of pleasure for the arcadians.

3 *The first thing that you notice about* **TLL** *is the phenomenal speed of the scrolling. At full tilt the screen is almost a blur. The second thing is the neatness of the graphics. The glimmering sea is particularly well done. It's a pity that the game doesn't quite match the standard of the graphics. The screen map looks quite large, but when playing you can fly from one end to the other in seconds. Getting the targets is very difficult and very frustrating. The game is very enjoyable though I suspect that its long term qualities are doubtful. I personally preferred* **Highway Encounter** *to this game.*

Presentation 85%
Very straightforward options and good on-screen instructions.

Graphics 94%
Scrolling is excellent but while the graphics are very good, there isn't space to enjoy the speed.

Sound 70%
Good spot FX if a little unoriginal.

Playability 83%
Very easy to slip into, not so easy to master.

Addictive qualities 79%
A game for arcade addicts, others may — eventually — tire.

Value For Money 88
A pound cheaper than the average for an above average game.

Overall 85%
An exquisite program that only lacks a tiny bit in the gameplay.

HOME OF THE HITS



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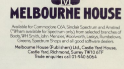
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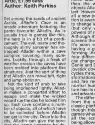
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N.O.M.A.D
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REVIEWS

ALLADIN'S CAVE

Artic, £7.95 cass
Author: Keith Purkiss

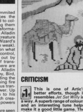


Set among the sands of ancient Arabia, *Alladin's Cave* is an arcade adventure featuring the panto favourite Alladin. As is usually true in games like this, the hero is in a bit of a predicament. The evil, nasty and thoroughly slimy sorcerer has entrapped Alladin within a cave complex covering many screens. Luckily, through a freak of weather erosion the caves have been melded into platform like structures. Just the sort of thing that Alladin can move left, right and jump about on.

Not the kind of arab to take being imprisoned lightly, Alladin makes a concerted effort to escape and make the wicked wizard rue the day he locked him up. Each cave contains a number of objects, all of which have to be collected before Alladin can get to the city. Once into the city, Alladin can give the sorcerer the come uppance he deserves. But, as in most arcade adventures, it's not that easy.

Hazards that prove dangerous to Alladin's health include rocks, birds, baboons, spiders and snakes. Having Alladin wander under or into any of these objects causes a sudden loss of life.

On each screen there are a number of magical objects which help with the escape plan, but,they must be collected without either getting trounced or leaving the screen. If either of these *faux pas* are commited then the wizard replaces the objects Alladin managed to collect. However, by getting them all a new power of transformation is awarded enabling Alladin to change into another creature (but only where the Wizard's powers of restriction are weak). Although it's not clear on what screens the wizard has control, it's soon easy to find out by having a go at a bit of transforming. At the most there are four different creatures Alladin can change into: Monkey, Bird, Genie and Dolphin. Holding the joystick down and pressing fire cycles through the various transformations in your power. Up and fire reverts Alladin to his normal human self. Each creature has its own peculiar powers and advantages.

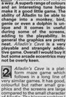


The different screens are seen from the side view stance in classic platform game style. Although this isn't one of those games where you have to collect all the screen objects before being allowed onto the next, and you are allowed to wander about the whole maze, the objects are reset once you leave and then re—enter a room. Points are awarded for a number of things, the best point catcher is collecting the mystical objects. If you do manage to reach the city, the the guard on the gates has to be bribed to let you in.

Control keys: A/Z up/down ,/. for left/right and shift for jump.



CRITICISM

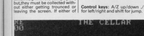


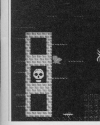
1 **This is one of Artic's better efforts, though it resembles *Jet Set Willy* in a way. A superb range of colours and an interesting tune helps make it a good little game. The ability of Alladin to be able to change into a monkey, bird, genie or even a dolphin is unique and it comes in useful during some of the screens, adding to the playability. In general the graphics are pretty neat. *Alladin's Cave* is a very playable and strangely addictive game. Overall I would buy it but some arcade eccentrics may not be overly keen.**

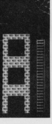
2 *Alladin's Cave* is a platform maze game which follows in a long line of very similar games. It has good, colourful but rather small graphics and the screens are large compared to the small character of Alladin. The biggest problem I found was actually controlling Alladin especially when using a joystick, nevertheless when I did actually get going I discovered some interesting rooms containing monsters from the far east and also many treasures. My overall opinion of *Alladin's Cave* is that it is colourful and quick but hard to control but most of all it is just another game and nothing special.



3 *Alladin's Cave is yet another arcade adventure that's made its way onto the Amstrad. For some strange reason this one is particularly limited with only 16 screens to be precise. The problems and obstacles to be negotiated are quite complex and well thought out, providing a considerable amount challenge. Graphically,* Alladin's Cave *is quite clever, making good use of the chromatically limited four colour mode. Alladin himself moves a bit awkwardly, however, having never really heard of true gravity, acceleration and inertia. Overall not a bad game though a little thin.*









Presentation 62%
Pretty title screen but no key definition options.

Graphics 77%
Quite clever all in all, with mode 1 being used to good effect.

Sound 52%
Ear-wracking melody but quite good sound effects.

Playability 70%
Controlling agile Alladin is quite funsome but . . . . .

Addictive qualities 60%
. . . the challenge may prove a little bit too challenging.

Value for money 58%
A little overpriced for what would have made a good budget release..

Overall 65%
Not a bad game and it may well appeal to platform addicts though it's charm could be limited among others.

GRUMPY GUMPHREY

Gremlin Graphics, £8.95 cass
Author: Sean Hollingworth

Grumpy Gumphrey Supersleuth isn't the first arcade adventure to be set in a department store, but the central character Gumphrey must be the first geriatric hero to star in a computer game!

Poor old Grumpy Gumphrey is definitely the department store's dogsbody. Apart from the fact that he is supposed to be guarding the shop's stock from marauding thieves (he is the Store Detective after all) Grumpy is also set a whole variety of tasks by the mean and moody manager. In between shooting mad, rampant ducks on the ground floor, Grumps has to make tea for his ungrateful boss and cope with a whole host of minor and major emergencies in the store.

Each task has to be completed within a time limit — gametime is relentlessly ticked off by a digital display at the foot of the screen. Failure to complete a task in time results in a summons from the manager. Once summoned, Grumpy has to make his way to the Manager's Office within half an hour to receive a warning letter. If he fails to arrive in time, it's instant dismissal and time for a new game.

The store is crowded with shoppers (and the odd toy soldier), who mill around manically getting in Grumpy's way as he tries to complete his tasks. If any of the characters other than the harmless hippy bump into him, Grumpy is pushed about and may be knocked off his feet — in which case he sits down. While he is sitting down, Grumpy gets closer to his next warning letter — sitting down on the job is frowned on at Mole Bros Stores! A bar at the bottom of the screen indicates how close Grumpy is to his next warning letter — as it gets shorter another missive gets closer. Four letters and he's out of a job.

A horizontal message area at the bottom of the screen displays the latest order from on high and is used to remind Grumpy of the next task he needs to complete in order to survive the day. Whenever the Manager calls, he must be obeyed immediately, and the current task put on ice.

There's a variety of objects scattered throughout the store which can be used to help Grumpy in his chores. To pick up an object, Grumpy has to be moved up to it and the pick up key pressed whereupon the object is transferred to his pocket — an area at the bottom right of the screen. Once an object has been picked up it can be dropped, used or knocked out of Grumpy's hands by jostling shoppers.

The Mole Bros store has four floors, each containing a number of departments selling a wide range of goodies to the shoppers. Grumpy can travel between floors in the lift, pressing the appropriate button to select a level. Watch out for the light switch though! There's also an escalator which travels up and down alternately and needs to be hopped onto at the right moment. Try to go up when the stairs are coming down and Grumpy takes a tumble.

Points are awarded for completing tasks and picking up objects, but the real score is collected by completing a day — worth 10,000 points no less. A whole variety of useful items can be found scattered around the weird and wacky store in which the action takes place. It's up to you to work out how they can best be used to assist Gumphrey in his campaign to avoid the sack.

If you don't succeed in completing all the tasks in one working day — from 9.00 in the morning till 5.30 in the evening — then there's always another day . . . providing Grumps hasn't had his cards!

Control keys: Q/W left and right, P/L up and down. D pickup/drop and S rotate objects.

CRITICISM

1 *Grumpy Gumphrey* **is quite a refreshing format game for the Amstrad. Though being a fairly standard arcade adventure the perspective of the view is really strange and very effective. The game itself is great, the first task of blasting away the ducks is a lot of fun. Graphically** *Grumpy Gumphrey* **is excellent, though in mode 1 there looks like far more than four colours on the screen at once. The 3D works very well, with Gumphrey moving behind and in front of all the right objects. GG** *is a must for all arcade adventure fanatics and is well worth a look at for those not normally keen.*

2 Well what more can I say? Another great game from Gremlin Graphics. Alright I suppose I could say that the 3D effect is really good and the colours are well distributed around the screen and create a very colourful playable game. The characters that chase you around the store are very well detailed and move around in a very busy body fashion — especially in the lift. The person who really got on my wick was the boss who was very persistent at getting his cup of tea and other liquor, he sacked me for smelling of ale when it was him who asked me to get the booze in the first place, (just like an editor)! *Superleuth* is a great game which I'm sure will be another hit for the GG team.

3 *I was pleasantly surprised when I first saw this Amstrad game is set in a very well furnished store with lots of fittings, bars, restaurants — very useful for your boss when he needs a stiff drink to keep him happy. When I first started this game I found that Gumphrey was a bit hard to control, and took quite a while to get used to the accuracy needed for positioning him near lifts and the like. One good feature is the scroll key which will move the objects around for easier dropping and using. The store you're in has a lot of personalities, who do their best to get in everyone's way, thankfully the Hippies don't do any harm (peace man)! How do Gremlin Graphics always keep on coming out with great games? I don't know I just play the games!*

Presentation 85%
Usual options, but an unusual appearance with some neat touches.

Graphics 91%
Excellent use of four colour mode with clever colour mixing.

Sound 67%
A spot above average but adequate.

Playability 91%
Great fun and easy to get into.

Addictive qualities 90%
Real long lasting appeal with lots of interesting and complex puzzles to complete.

Value for money 88%
Abnormal game for a normal price.

Overall 90%
A very polished and well thought out game well worth a look at.

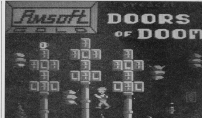
DOORS OF DOOM



Amsoft Gold, £8.95 cass
Author: Gem Software

The Story of the *Doors of Doom* starts with a normal person such as yourself catapulted onto the planet of Doom. A disembodied voice explained to the perplexed figure that the Planet Doom is a testing ground for evolving species to test there understanding. If the species under test is found wanting then the race is exterminated. To prove racial worthiness a random representative is taken from the species' home planet. Around the planet several pieces of Doom's Door are scattered randomly on the surface. The representative has to collect and replace all the pieces of wayward door. Now that would be easy and not any old race can enter the Galactic Mind so things are made a little bit tough to provide some sort of challenge.

Harassing you throughout are a number globular looking robots, all of them detrimental to your energy supply. The scenery is not all that harmless either.





Doom's flora and fauna is a little bit odd, not your usual land scaped garden look. Rotating skulls, pulsing rods and wavy water is all a little savage on the energy.

A power band displays your energy and life force along the top of the screen. If it reaches zero then your planet is destroyed along with its inhabitants, at least there's no one to be disappointed in you. There is some help on your side however, a Multifrenic weapons system is in your charge. The trouble is that the various modules that activate different functions are also scattered about the planet's surface. Walking over a weapons pod allows one use of the system contained. There are six separate functions which are cycled through with cursor up/down keys. Z activates a weapons system. Constantly allowed, though, is indiscriminate blasting with a defender like laser. Three or four hits from this little beauty destroys a robot.

Your hero is shown in glorious mode 0 multicolour using various shades of colour to round normally ragged pixels. The background moves around as opposed to the hero moving that much and scrolls a character at a time either left or right. The backgrounds are lavish, mostly made from bricks and pillars, taking a very yellow approach.

Also included is a screen designer allowing you to alter and define the planet Doom to make your progress through it a little bit easier. Loaded as a separate program it allows the player to edit the main background file or create a personal one. End creations can be loaded back in later for play.

Control keys: Q/W left/right, A to fire.

CRITICISM

1 **There is nothing wrong with this game. It's a good plot, has good instructions, brilliant graphics and excellent sound. The scenery set up is excellent and you can use the screen designer if you want to experiment with the games graphical content.** ***Doors of Doom*** **is a very addictive game which has shooting robots and enough energy sapping rivers to give you sufficient hassle over collecting all pieces of the door. When you are beaten there's a catchy tune whilst you choose your skill level for your next attempt. Overall this is a brilliant game with some of the best graphics I've seen since** ***Sorcery Plus.*** **It's well worth buying!**

2 Definitely the best release yet from Gem, much better than Roland in Space and Roland in Time. The music is excellent and the graphics superlative, a real eye opener using mode 0 to great effect. The palette-changing skulls are marvellous. Not only is *Doors of Doom* a first class game but there's a friendly screen designer included to stop the scenery getting dull and very versatile it is to. I hope Amsoft's Gold range keeps up to this standard as I eagerly await any of their future releases.

3 Doors of Doom *is an arcade adventure type game with the facility for you to design your own scenery. The object is to collect the pieces which are scattered about the planet. The graphics are realistic in the case of the backgrounds but not so with the moving figures. It can also be disconcerting to get lost in a cloud of robots not knowing where you are. Even on level one the game is not easy to play as the energy level drops very quickly and the cups of tea do not supply much extra (Liddon note please)! Although it is not difficult to collect several pieces of the door, there is the problem of trying to conserve energy to find the rest. The screen designer is not very easy to use and awkwardly implemented. Key response is sluggish and it is often difficult to find the character you require. The game itself is* **very** *addictive and great fun to play, though I see anyone buying the game making extended use of the screen designer.*

Presentation 89%
Lovely title screen with excellent screen designer.

Graphics 97%
The best I've seen yet with wonderful use of colour.

Sound 94%
Good theme tune rendition and very pleasing to the ear.

Playability 89%
Initially great fun on a simple blast em up level.

Addictive qualities 93%
Great long term appeal with interest kept up by screen designer.

Value for money 89%
A bit dear as it's Amsoft Gold but well worth the money.

Overall 89%
A great game from Amsoft and hopefully marking the start of a new trend.


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SWEEVO'S WORLD

Gargoyle Games, £7.95 cass
Author: Greg Follis and Roy Carter

Sweevo is an android, a **S**elf **W**illed **E**xtreme **E**nvironment **V**ocational **O**rganism or as most people would put it a klutz. Though the latest in android design and mechanoid mechanics, Sweevo is a bit of a failure really. During Sweevo time at the Robot—Android Training School (RATS) he left a trail of devastation and mayhem behind where ever he blundered. Normally such a failure would be terminated but the old Robo—Master couldn't bring himself to be quite so heartless and instead decided to give poor old Sweevo a chance to redeem himself. As a bit of a test Sweevo is sent by his tutor to clean up a problem world in the grand empire of man. If he succeeds then Sweevo can progress to Active Status. The Old Droid, not really wanting Sweevo to graduate to active status gave his prodigy a real doozy of a world to clean up.

Named Knutz Folly, the environment for cleansiness treatment is an artificial planetoid created by Baron Von Knutz for his wife. To say the Baron wasn't in possession of all his marbles is a bit of an understatement, in fact the man was somewhat of a marble desert. Understandably a world created by a mind like that turned out a little bit odd. In fact it's very strange indeed. Guarding Knutz's Folly are a number of various guards and though each is a formidable foe they all have their own special weaknesses to which they are drawn. This is mainly caused by a deprived childhood in the vats, it's your job to find and use the organisms' weaknesses against them. It is advisable that Knutz's denizens are despatched as quickly as is possible.

Well worth a splatting are 'widgers' — the Waste Ingestion and Janitor Units. These little techno marvels were originally designed to clean and look after the folly but they can be an extreme nuisance. The point of the game is to waste all the Wijus.

Sweevo and his world around him is presented in an Ultimate style 3D view, similar to the viewing concept in *Alien 8* and *Knightlore*. The droid's actions are fairly limited and he can only move about in four directions on the floor, convincingly moving in front of and behind various bits of scenery. Also among Sweevo's powers is the ability to hold three objects. The three positions where the objects are placed are shown at the bottom left of the screen. One by one they are highlighted automatically and if an empty position is lit up and you press pick up with an

object in front of Sweevo then the object jumps into your inventory. Most of the puzzles on Knutz's folly need to be solved by moving objects around.

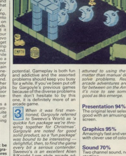
The different guards' weaknesses soon become quite obvious. One is in the form of a little girl who skips around. In an adjacent room a teddy bear can be found. Drop the teddy bear onto the little girl's head and she is no more. Other nasties include a goose stepping dictator who's a bit weak when it comes to boots.

Just like any droid, Sweevo runs on batteries. There are five sets of lives and in the top left hand side of the screen is a fax representation of the moronic machine. As the lives creep downwards his visage changes from happy calm to very much less than happy. If a life is lost a skull replaces Sweevo's rounded features, grinning grimly from the screen. Bumping into dangerous objects brings Sweevo nearer to prejudicial termination, four bumps and one life wafts its way to that great android dump in the sky.

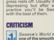
Though the droid can't jump, he can wrestle his way onto higher platforms by standing on the pressure sensitive lift pads. Stand on one of these and it move upwards. There are four levels to the Folly and Sweevo can start on any of them. To get to another floor there are jump pads and holes dotted around. Jumpads kick you upstairs while (get this) holes drop you into a lower screen. On each floor there is a proliferation of certain types of obstacle. On the Lonesome Pine floor, a load of deadly to touch pineapples sit around. Fingers Floor is all together more deadly, with random digits popping up from out of the floor to hassle you just the way icebergs did the Titanic.

Upon loss of all five lives a detailed dissection of your progress reels off. Usually it's quite depressing but after a bit of practice you'll be Sweevoing with the best of them.





CRITICISM



1 *Sweevo's World* **must be one of the smoothest graphic arcade-adventures I've ever seen on the Amstrad. The colour is well used and provides good definition for all the characters. The whole game is a sort of 3D** *Knight Lore* **with a very humourous element to it. Sweevo himself is a very cuddly wobbly character (a bit E.T.'ish). The things you meet on your travels up and down the world of Sweevo are excellently animated and are complemented by the superbly detailed backgrounds and the neat little tunes. The gameplay may feel a bit slow at first but does tend to speed up in some bits.** *Sweevo's World*, **I'm sure, will be a massive hit, so you'd better buy it quick, so you can get a head start on everyone else.**

2 *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8* were introduced to the Amstrad ages ago and since then there hasn't been any really outstanding 3D games. Now Gargoyle Games have taken time off from producing the Siege Of Earth trilogy and have come up with a comical yet stunning program. The problems featured in Sweevo's World require a much more physical solution than any of Gargoyle's previous games. The graphics are some of the best featured on an Amstrad game with colour being used to its full potential. Gameplay is both fun and addictive and the assorted problems should keep you busy for a while. If you've been put off by Gargoyle's previous games because of the diverse problems then don't hesitate to by this one, it is definitely more of an arcade game.

3 *When it was first mentioned, Gargoyle referred to* Sweevo's World *as 'a quickie fun package we're throwing together for Christmas'. Gargoyle are noted for good solid product, so a 'fun package' was bound to be interesting — delightful, then, to find the game every bit a serious contender.* Sweevo's *is an excellent* Alien 8/Knight Lore *style arcade adventure which incorporates the best 3D graphics yet seen on the Amstrad, the use of colour and the big characters are excellent. It also improves on the Ultimate graphics by quite some measure. It's not just pretty to look at either, the game has some very tricky puzzles and proves to be amusing, absorbing and addictive to play. Sweevo himself has a character not unlike that of old American film comedian Stan Laurel of Laurel and Hardy fame — the packaging actually uses Stan's characteristic head scratching pose, and there is a reference to their 'hit' song* The Lonesome Pine. *There is a lack of any really fast action, but then arcade adventurers are more attuned to using the old grey matter than manual dexterity to solve problems. Really good arcade adventures are few and far between on the Amstrad and it's nice to see something as good as this emerge.*

Presentation 94%
The original level select is very good with an amusing progress screen.

Graphics 95%
Amazingly fast and very detailed with clever use of colour.

Sound 70%
Two channel sound, nothing startling.

Playability 92%
Instant fun, and the attractive graphics make you want to explore Knutz Folly.

Addictive qualities 93%
200 rooms plus numerous silly and serious puzzles to solve.

Value for money 95%
A quid below the average and such a good game.

Overall 94%
Definitely one for the collection — let's hope Gargoyle throw a few more quickie fun packages together.

The Cracking Christmas Collect

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HYPER SPORTS
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PING PONG
You can almost feel the tension of the big match breaking through the screen . . . the expectant crowd is almost on top of you! You return the service with a top spin backhand, then a forward back-spin, the ball bounces high from your opponent's looping, defensive lod . . . SMASH! . . . a great shot opens the score . . . but this is only your first point! Play head to head or against the computer in this, Konami's first and best table-tennis simulation.



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THWAK!

ELITE

Firebird, £14.95 cass
Author: Torus

Starting life on the BBC, *Elite* was converted for the Commodore, wended it's way onto the Spectrum and now, a mere three months late, it's out for the Amstrad.

Converted by Torus, creators of Spectrum *Elite*, the Amstrad version follows a very similar format to its other incarnations. With stars in your eyes and a Cobra Mk III space ship under your control, you've set yourself the task of becoming Elite, a combateer of the highest ranking. To get 'Elite' status you have to rise through several distinct stages starting with the almost derogatory rating of 'Harmless'. The more ships you kill, the higher your rating rises, although mindless violence is not the only aspect to the game.

To become an efficient killer you must have a well equipped ship, replete with weapons of destruction. When you start, the ship you're given is a pretty poor machine, not really up to the rigours of deep space combat, so the best thing to do is to buy extra equipment from the space stations to be found in orbit around every planet. Most of the military hardware doesn't come cheap and seeing as how you only start with one hundred credits you obviously need to make some money. This is where the mindwork comes into play — you have to trade.

Every planet in the eight galaxies has a tech rating and some information detailing the world's economy. Using a trader's cunning, you can buy goods at one planet and take them to another to sell them for a profit. To be sure of making a profit it is wise to sell goods naturally rare on the planet you're trading with. For example a tech level 12, highly industrialised planet will probably have to import food, making the market price quite high. If you buy food from a low tech agricultural planet you can ferry it to the more advanced planet for a good profit margin.

Information about each planet's political state is available, ranging from corporate state to anarchy. It is not wise to travel to an anarchic system with little in the way of weaponry as the place is crawling with pirates. And pirates are doubly aware of you if you're carrying any cargo.

Different cultures aren't too friendly with each other — you can't land on planets. This makes trade awkward, so it's effected through a system of space stations. Each trading planet is orbited by a Coriolis space station with which you must dock — a time consuming and finicky task. Once docked, you can refuel your ship and barter your wares inside the hanger. If you get rich, it's possible to buy a docking computer to make life easier.

Fuel is only expended when you use hyperwarp for interstellar travel. Pottering around in planetary space burns no fuel and trips can be costed in fuel terms on a the short range chart. If you've bought some fuel scoops you can pick up free fuel by flying close and raking energy from the a star's corona — sun skimming.

Bounty hunting is lucrative and simple: jump into an anarchic system and blast away at everything. A kill point is awarded for each ship destroyed and your credit status grows with the bounty. It is, however, best to go in heavily armed, and with a fair amount battle experience. Other loot gathering activities include asteroid mining, slave trading and drug running — but the last two are prohibited and harm your legal status.

You see the action from the cockpit, viewing a 3D representation of space. Three other views are available through left, right and rear windows. The display is very colourful indeed when compared to the monochrome of the other versions of *Elite*. The planets and suns that appear on the main scanner are filled in and different ships are drawn in changing colours. Using highly detailed vector display to create the ships, *Elite* is somewhat reminiscent of the old arcade hit *Battlezone*.

To keep track of ships and asteroids not in your immediate vicinity, there's an oval short range chart. Other ships, attacking and friendly, are represented as a bar with small a hook at the end showing the height above or below your ship and distance from it.

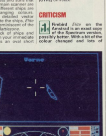
A wealth of informative documentation comes with the cassette. A book commissioned from SF writer Robert Holdstock gives an interesting story plus a multitude of veiled hints for survival in a rough galaxy. The Space Traders' Flight Training Manual is also included, an essential guide to survival giving hints on docking, trade and combat. You also receive a pretty wallchart to hang in your cabin!

If you are doing well it's possible to save out your progress to tape. This will record all your status attributes including score and credits.

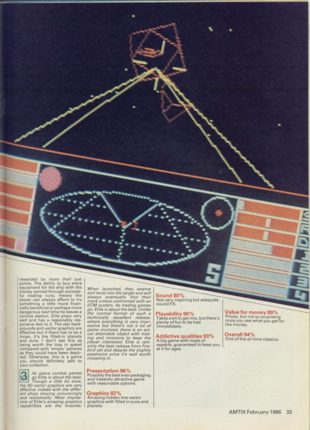
Control keys: (S/X) up/down; **(./,)** rotate left/right; **(ESC)** escape capsule; **(1)** launch/front view; **(2)** trade/rear view; **(3)** sell/left; **(4)** equip ship/right; **(5)** galactic chart; **(6)** local chart; **(7)** star system data; **(8)** market prices; **(9)** info on yourself; **(0)** cargo inventory; **(TAB)** energy bomb; **(E)** ECM; **(T)** target missile; **(U)** unarm; **(M)** fire; **(D)** distance to planet; **(A)** fire; **(H)** hyperspace; **(G)** galactic hyperspace; **(J)** jump; **(DEL)** freeze; **(CTRL)** unfreeze.

CRITICISM

1 **Firebird *Elite* on the Amstrad is an exact copy of the Spectrum version, possibly better. With a bit of the colour changed and lots of special missions to keep you occupied. *Elite* on any computer would be a hit, just because it's the most original game of the decade. The movement of the ships is great, with no noticeable flicker at all. The launch sequence is excellent and very smooth. The game of *Elite* itself is very complex and needs a fast finger and a very shrewd mind. Amstrad *Elite* is harder than the Speccy version but not as hard as the Beeb version, which seems about the right formula to me.**
I'm sure it will be a hit and keep us Amstrad owners zapping for years to come. What more can I say! Stop buying games for a few months and save up for *Elite*, it's worth it!



2 This is a game for the explorer. The kind of person who likes to fight for what he gets. There's little to match the thrill of half a dozen pirate ships spinning around you — trying to make this trip your last — before you blow them all apart. Of course, a degree of skill is needed and this will have to be acquired through patience and constant play. But the end result is worth it. It's very satisfying to see good play



rewarded by more than just points. The ability to buy extra equipment for the ship with the money earned through successful trading runs, means the player can always afford to try something a little more financially beneficial or perhaps more dangerous next time he leaves a coriolis station. *Elite* plays very well and has a reasonably responsive feel to it. The star backgrounds and vector graphics are effective but if there has to be a moan, it's the filled-in planets and suns. I don't see this as being worth the loss in speed compared with 'empty' spheres as they could have been depicted. Otherwise, this is a game you should definitely add to your collection.

3 *As space combat games go Elite is about the best. Though a little bit slow, the 3D vector graphics are very effective indeed with the different ships moving convincingly and realistically. Most impressive of Elite's amazing graphics capabilities are the missiles. When launched, they swerve and twist into the target and will always eventually find their mark unless confronted with an ECM system. As trading games go, Elite is about the best. Unlike the normal format of such a technically excellent release, where everything is very impressive but there's not a lot of game involved, there is an actual attainable object with trading and missions to keep the player interested. Elite is certainly the best release from Firebird yet and despite the slightly expensive price it's well worth investing in.*

Presentation 96%
Possibly the best ever packaging and instantly attractive game with reasonable options.

Graphics 92%
Amazing hidden line vector graphics with filled in suns and planets.

Sound 80%
Not very inspiring but adequate sound FX.

Playability 90%
Takes a bit to get into, but there's plenty of fun to be had immediately.

Addictive qualities 93%
A big game with loads of aspects, guaranteed to keep you at it for ages.

Value for money 89%
Pricey, but not so surprising once you see what you get for the money.

Overall 94%
One of the all-time classics.

WRIGGLER



Romantic Robot, £7.95 cass, £11.95 disk
Author: Devonshire House
Machine: All

A Wriggler is a little maggot. You may find it very hard to look upon a maggot endearingly but they really can be very cute — particularly this chap. You may not have heard the likes of David Bellamy claim this, but maggots are down to earth, competitive creatures; they enjoy testing each other to the limit. In fact *Wriggler* was inspired by the equivalent of the maggot Olympiad, the annual maggot marathon. Your task is to guide one of these cuddly chaps to victory but as you might suspect life as a maggot is fraught with dangers and frustrations at every turn.

The winner of the race — the one to carry away the fame and glory — will be the maggot who reaches the famed lift shaft first. To reach the goal the victorious maggot has to traverse all manner of terrain. The game is a maze of over 250 screens covering four basic types of landscape, each landscape is a maze within itself. The game starts in the garden from which you must escape to the scrublands then into the underground and finally into the mansion. There is no single route to victory, so there's plenty of scope to be an original maggot.

Exploring a maze can be very hard work, a fact brought home by the ever diminishing energy bar — after a quickie funeral headstone is placed in remembrance of your expired friend and then it's off again with the second of your three wrigglers. Encounters with the varied wild life within each of the maze areas also has the same effect on your energy, only it's much more dramatic. Maggots can only survive an entanglement with an ant for a few seconds before the life force is trampled out and contact with other creatures, like the large spider, means instant death. Each area has its own peculiar hazards, so you must find a way past them all.

The energy bar can be restored by consuming food found within the areas. Anything from a cup of tea to a cream cake can be picked up and devoured, or, if your energy is alright, can be kept for a picnic later. Apart from food you should keep your feelers peeled for other inedible objects. Within the maze you may come across objects whose value is not immediately apparent, objects like a parachute (even maggots get hurt after a thousand foot fall into the underground), keys, money, extra lives or tins of ant spray. It would be nice to pick up each object as you find it but maggots don't have pockets. You can only carry one object at a time including food. You are going to have to be a pretty calculating little maggot to get the right object to the right place and wriggle your way to victory.

CRITICISM

1 ***Wriggler*** **is one of the most attractive arcade adventure games I have seen for a very long time. The animated characters are both large and attractive. The giant spider is animated so well I thought it was going to crawl off the screen onto my keyboard. I was a little disappointed to see that characters passing each other resulted in colour clash. The game area is necessarily huge because it is the size and variation of the maze that gives the game any degree of difficulty, you won't find yourself riveted to the edge of your chair going grey because you have to make many split second decisions. Instead I think that** ***Wriggler*** **is a game for the explorer who can appreciate the wonderful scenery through which you must drive your maggot.**

2 *Wriggler* is a conversion of a very attractive and colourful Spectrum hit but it still retains some colour clashes, which is a shame. Although the gameplay tends to be slow and unresponsive you grow used to it after a while — most worms are pretty slow anyway. Some of the creatures that you meet on your travels are finely detailed and move very smoothly. At first I just thought the layout of the maze was confusing but later I decided that it was simply illogical, you can travel in one direction and end up in the most unexpected places. Most of the areas are very bricky until you reach the fabulous moon maze which is very well laid out. This is certainly not a game for those who just enjoy splattering everything in sight — it's more of a slow patient trek through life.

3 *The thing about* Wriggler *that appeals to me most is the combination of strategy, arcade and adventure. I admit that the arcade element is a low because the game is a little slow and prancing about the joint can seem a bit protracted. Nevertheless the graphics are enjoyable and are certainly worth exploring. I thought the music was excellent, it's such a shame that it couldn't have run for much longer during the game. I am afraid that the other sound effects paled into insignificance alongside the music. This certainly isn't an easy game to complete so it should keep you occupied for a very long time and I think at the asking price its well worth buying.*

Presentation 79%
Plenty of keyboard options which are clearly presented.

Graphics 88%
Very attractive, shame about the clash and speed

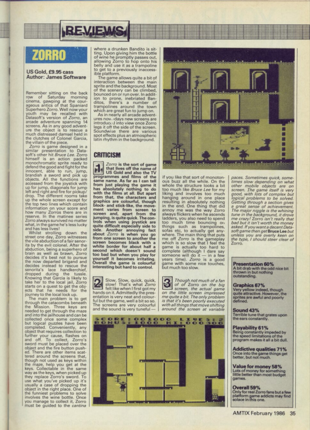
Sound 84%
Superb tune, ordinary spot FX.

Playability 71%
An attractive game to play if a little cumbersome.

Addictive qualities 73%
If you're into long walks in the garden and spiders don't frighten you then you should have lots of fun.

Value For Money 88%
Below average, especially the disk price so there's no chance of you being 'done'.

Overall 87%
See maggots in a new light.



ZORRO

US Gold, £9.95 cass
Author: James Software

Remember sitting on the back row of Saturday morning cinema, gawping at the courageous antics of that Spaniard Superhero Zorro. Well now your youth may be recalled with Datasoft's version of *Zorro*, an arcade adventure spanning 14 screens. As in any good adventure the object is to rescue a much distressed damsel held in the clutches of Colonel Garcia, the villain of the piece.

Zorro is game designed in a similar presentation to Datasoft's other hit *Bruce Lee*. Zorro himself is an action packed monochromatic sprite ready to defend the good and fight for the innocent, able to run, jump, brandish a sword and pick up objects. All the functions are accessed from the joystick with up for jump, diagonals for jump left and right and fire for pickup/drop. The different rooms take up the whole screen except for the top two lines which contain information on your score and how many Zorros there are in reserve. In the matinee series Zorro always survived no matter what, in the game he's less lucky and has less lives!

Whilst strolling down the street one day, Zorro witnesses the vile abduction of a fair senorita by the evil colonel. After the abduction, being a superhero of brain as well as brawn, Zorro decides it's best not to pursue the now departed brigand and decides instead to rescue the senorita's lace handkerchief, dropped during the tussle. Knowing that Garcia is likely to take her to the local jail, Zorro starts on a quest to get the objects that he needs for the journey to the local lock up.

The main problem is to get through the catacombs beneath the Mission. Three keys are needed to get through the maze and into the jailhouse and can be collected once some complex but logical puzzles have been completed. Conveniently, any object that requires collection to further your cause, flashes on and off. To collect, Zorro's sword must be placed over the object and the fire button pushed. There are other items scattered around the screens that, though not used as keys within the maze, help you get at the keys. Collectable in the same way as the keys, when picked up they replace Zorro's sword. To use what you've picked up it's usually a case of dropping the object in the right place. One of the funniest problems to solve involves the wine bottle. Once you manage to collect it, Zorro must be guided to the *cantina* where a drunken Bandito is sitting. Upon giving him the bottle of wine he promptly passes out, allowing Zorro to hop onto his belly and use it as a trampoline to get to a previously inaccessible platform.

The game allows quite a bit of interaction between the main sprite and the background. Most of the scenery can be climbed, bounced on or run over. In addition to prone, inebriated Banditos, there's a number of trampolines around the town which are great fun to jump on.

As in nearly all arcade adventures nowadays new screens are introduced into view once Zorro legs it off the side of the screen. Soundwise there are various spot effects plus an atmospheric latin rhythm in the background.

CRITICISM

1 **_Zorro_ is the sort of game that lives off the name of US Gold and also the TV programmes and films of the same name. As far as I can tell from just playing the game it has absolutely nothing to do with the films at all. But apart from that, the characters and graphics are colourful, though block- and stick-like, the movement varies from screen to screen and, apart from the jumping, is quite quick. The controls when using joystick are quite difficult especially side to side. Another annoying fact about _Zorro_ is when you go from one screen to another the screen becomes black with a white border for about half a second which doesn't sound too bad but when you play for yourself it becomes irritating. Overall the game is colourful interesting but hard to control.**

2 Slow, Slow, quick, quick, slow! That's what *Zorro* felt like when I first got my hands on it. Admittedly the presentation is very neat and colourful but the game, well a bit so so. The screens are very colourful and the sound is very tuneful — if you like that sort of monotonous buzz all the while. On the whole the structure looks a bit too much like *Bruce Lee* for my liking and involves too much hanging around in one place resulting in absolutely nothing in the end. One thing that did annoy me was the way Zorro always flickers when he ascends ladders, you also need to spend too much time bouncing on things such as trampolines, sofas etc, to actually get anywhere. The main thing that puts me off *Zorro* is the gameplay which is so slow that I feel the game is actually too hard to complete (although I dare say someone will do it — in a few years time). *Zorro* is a good game with some nice touches, but much too slow.

3 *Though not much of a fan of of* Zorro *on the big screen, the actual game on the little screen impressed me quite a bit. The only problem is that it's been poorly executed with all things that move shifting around the screen at variable paces. Sometimes quick, sometimes slow depending on what other mobile objects are on screen. The game itself is very good, with lots of complex but logical problems to be solved. Getting through a section gives a great sense of achievement. The major niggle is the whining tune in the background, it drove me crazy!* Zorro *isn't really that bad but it isn't worth the money asked. If you want a decent Datasoft game then get* **Bruce Lee** *but unless you are overly keen on the type, I should steer clear of* Zorro.

Presentation 60%
A bit drab with the odd nice bit thrown in but nothing outstanding.

Graphics 67%
Very yellow indeed, though quite attractive. However, the sprites are awful and poorly defined.

Sound 43%
Terrible tune that grates upon the ears constantly.

Playability 61%
Being constantly impeded by the speed limitations of the program makes it all a bit dull.

Addictive qualities 71%
Once into the game things get better, but not much.

Value for money 58%
Lots of money for something little better than most budget games.

Overall 59%
Only for real Zorro fans but a few platform game addicts may find solace in this one.

AMSOFT

WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

Amsoft still remain the largest publishing house for Amstrad software but in recent months they have been coming under increasing criticism for the poor quality of their software — now it seems that that is all to change.

And now for the most dangerous assignment of the month — the visit to Amsoft. Dangerous? Well there's the M54, the M6, M1, M25 and then the assault of Fort Amstrad itself. You might think that Amstrad being on the M25 is very convenient — well it would be if the M25 had been there — because it wasn't, at least not very much of it. Somehow, despite the torrential rain, blanket fog and the unbelievably fast Sierras, I managed to navigate the subtle blend of dual carriageways, country roads and traffic islands that my map told me was a full scale motorway. Once in Brentwood finding Amstrad was a doddle, parking was impossible — so difficult in fact I even considered parking my car in the slot marked **Amstrad Vice President** but I came to my senses and parked on the pavement outside the magistrates court.

I was tempted to pause outside and admire the splendour of the Amstrad Midi-tower block, elegantly parked besides Alan Sugar's Roller. I was tempted and wet. The heavens still had it in for me. Going inside now seemed an altogether reasonable prospect and besides I felt a bit of a prat standing in a the middle of the car park trying to keep the rain off my coat, camera, hair and case.

Life inside was none too rosy. Signing in was fine except that I didn't understand half the questions and then the security man stuck a badge on me proclaiming, in big bold letters for all to see, **VISITOR**. 'No, no' I yelled as I was ushered to the lift, 'I'm not one of them . . . look the skin's real. It doesn't peel off and I've never eaten a mouse in my life' I was still protesting my humanity when the lift doors slammed. 'It's no good complaining you know,' advised a very tiny voice, 'it won't do you any good.' I would like to have stayed for a bit of chat — lifts can tell a thing or two you know — but the doors opened to reveal Amsoft, well most of it anyway. Peter Roebuck and Mike Mordecai.

Into the Amster's den

I was taken to a natty little room that looked like a games testing area. I had never seen a more motley collection of computers before. A couple of 464s a Commodore, a BBC and, over in the corner, was the *other* 664.

Amsoft played a vital part in making sure that Amstrad didn't get stuck in the circular rut of little software few sales, few sales little software. The way in which Amsoft set about breaking out of this trap conjures up some lovely images. Peter explained that, in true Amstrad fashion, Amsoft examined the market to see what games were popular at the time and then set about getting them written for the new, un-born computer. A third party handed out boxes full of electronics, which carried no physical evidence as to whose computer this was. It was referred to simply as Arnold. Many of the original writers had no idea that they were working for Amstrad.

Now that Amsoft have competition they come in for a fair bit of criticism because many of their games are considered of poor quality and expensive for what they are. I cited *Assault On Port Stanley* (rated at 12% issue 3) as an example but Peter rebuffed me with 'It will sell'. Anybody who has seen that game would like to know why he is so confident. I had seen it but try as I might I couldn't get a definitive answer. But he did say that if a consumer doesn't want to buy then he won't spend 50p, but if he does,



then he will spend £8.95. Uh? The same confidence was expressed over the potential sales of *Raid*, despite my protests that I had seen better games for less money. 'Ah, but it's a big name.' Ah! Now we are getting somewhere.

I think that Amsoft have been spoilt by Amstrad's success. After all, the rate at which the Amstrad population grew, each one with a proud and eager owner poised at the keyboard, meant that the initial demand for software left something of a void, a case of never mind the quality feel the width. Amsoft filled that gap, they provided a wide range of titles which owners where eager to buy, at £8.95. A situation akin to the early days of the Spectrum. Now the Amstrad has grown up and there are software houses up and down the land learning how to squeeze excellence out of it.

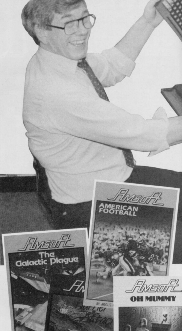
Amsoft know competition when they see it and they also know a discerning market when it pops up. The gentleman responsible for bringing in *Assault on Port Stanley* is no longer with the company, times have changed. From now on Amsoft will admit no more cruddy games into their catalogue. 'If it doesn't come up to the Amsoft gold standard then we don't want it. People who buy Amstrad computers should have faith in the software from the same company.' I agreed. The new, more selective policy, should go a long way to restoring that faith.

Amsoft's playing a new game

With that in mind we discussed future possible releases but these guys being Amsoft 'the future' meant next week, any event falling into a more advanced time period was deemed not to exist. Having said that, the Saga range of games, including *Tapper* and *Zaxxon* should be appearing soon. They would have been with us now if a little conversion company called Epicsoft had come clean, and announced their belief a little sooner that the conversion from Commodore to Amstrad was impossible. Another little number that looks very interesting is a game called *Macrocosmica*. It's not fair to draw comparisons with *Elite*, but this is a space trading, strategy, arcade game. The graphics are of a very reasonable standard and there are some original touches like the casino, pirates, taxes and telex machines. More importantly Amsoft are moving rapidly in the direction of disk only software. You remember the review of *Strangeloop* in the last issue? Well Amsoft intend marketing *Strangeloop Plus*, more game, more graphics. The same has been done for *The Doors of Doom*. They have two games which won't even have a poor relation on tape. *Tank Command* uses complex overlays to produce a very effective strategy, arcade type game with superb graphics. That game was designed around continuous disk access although 6128 owners will find that it uses their extra 64K as a RAM disk, and stuffs itself in there. The other disk access game is a highly graphical adventure. The price for all of the disk games seems set at £13.95. This new breed of game should do a great deal to restore Amsoft's tarnished image. Owners of 8256s shouldn't feel left out because *3D Sirius Chess II* will be made available for them in January. It seems that a range of games for this machine will follow; described as 'executive', a description dismissed by Mike as being 'prattish', he favours 'intelligent games'. Ever played *Dun Darach* Mike?

A change in the air

One area where Amsoft have served the market well has been in application software. In this area they tend towards caution, being more selective about the type of titles they take on. Of course they do all sorts of





Mr Mordecai proving that the keys don't plop out, no matter how hard you shake it.

A nasty little pirate bearing down on you, call FAST

Loading up with goodies in Microcosmica

accounts packages, word processors and the like, but I was interested in the more obscure subjects. Tucked away in some dark corner Peter has such goodies as *The Doctor*, a sort of do it your self diagnostic program; also a handwriting analyser and even a people compatibility tester. There's no doubt that the Amstrad is the perfect vehicle for such oddities but Amsoft doubt that the market is ready. Peter recalled his trip to the USA when he went to bid for *Bounty Bob Strikes Back*. Two things struck him. Firstly the Atari, on which the game was being demonstrated, because it was embedded in concrete! The second observation was that the English games market was, at the time going through, 'what the eye sees the hand reacts to, like *Pacman* stage,' while the Americans were one step further with, 'what the eye sees, the head thinks about and the hand reacts to.' Now he believes that the American market is moving away from games software altogether, they are making use of computers in more practical ways. Peter believes that sooner or later the English software market will pick up on the trend. The home vet and doctor set are just round the corner then?

Amsoft's immediate plans for business software have been frustrated a little by Ashton Tate's refusal to let their *Data Base II* be marketed for £49.95. This is a shame especially since Sorcim seem pleased with the deal Amsoft put together for their *Supercalc 2*. The end result of the *DB II* saga is that it's going to cost an Amstrad user nearly £400, a situation which is bound to lead to piracy, or someone like Campblesoft coming up with something better. But, be thee not depressed, the good news is that Amsoft have secured, by fair means or foul, the widely appreciated *Simplex* accounts system, to be made available for £49.95. Looks like a certain hairdresser in Ironbridge will be changing her accounting system — again.

The dilemma of the disappearing disks

Amsoft have one other responsibility to us Amsters and that's the supply of 3" disks. Where are they fellas? The response was immediate and overwelming. 'Someone else has got them all, we haven't.' Amstrad have brought in over 1 million 3" disks and very few of those have shown up again — someone is stockpiling them — or eating them. Mike claimed that the rate of import is 200,000 units per month but I simply can't agree with his suggestion that Bill Poel (Boss man of Newstar) has got them all, his house just isn't that big. Besides, I'm sure his wife would draw the line at living with Bill and one million CF2s. But seriously, if Amstrad imported a million disks then unless they have been nicked, and no one noticed, they must have sold them, and that means invoices and things. Ah well the official line is that Amstrad are importing them and someone else is stockpiling them.

As for the future the only person who knows for certain is Mr Sugar. Recently there has been a lot more than idle talk about the use of compact discs with computers, and it's no secret that Amstrad are about to launch a Midi HI-FI with all the important bits plus a compact disc, all for £299. The immediate thought is that if they can put a compact disc in an costly stereo and sell it for that, how much would they charge for a computer bolt on version? Neither gentleman would comment further than express their own personnel enthusiasm for the idea. Surprise, surprise! Interesting thought though — just think of the potential. And what about the satellite dish that the seventh floor are having installed on the roof? — could it be that Roland Perry is working on a personal spy satellite with built in monitor? is this the UK contribution to Star Wars — a dished up Arnold? The lift wasn't giving anything away either. ●


HA HA! HO HO! HEE HEE!
YOU COULD WIN THE CRAZIEST DAY OF YOUR LIFE!
AMTIX! COMPETITIO
SAM SHOVEL – P.I. ..... IN SEARCH OF THE NUMBER ONE SOFTWARE
M.A.D. GAMES
IT WAS A DARK NIGHT... TOO DARK. I MADE MY WAY TO PIER 9 TO MEET THE CHICK WITH THE BLONDE HAIR. SHE WAS TO ARRIVE BY SEA-PLANE AT 11·15 PM
SHE ARRIVES ON TIME, BUT KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT THE SOFTWARE – A DEAD LEAD....

For a bit of fun, the Wacky and Zany, Zany and Wacky personages down at Mastertronics Towers in London have decided to offer a lucky reader the chance of an expenses-paid CRAZY DAY OUT.

Judging by our visits to them, and their visits to us, when crazy things happen quite normally, if they **really** try to give someone a Mad Day Out, things could get crazeee. Like loonie. Gabba Gabba Hey! And so on ....

The MAD range of games are a bit crazy — crazy on price. For £2.99 you get an awful lot of game. How do they do it? Why do they do it? Will they keep on doing it? What **is** it, anyway? Ho, ho. The butterflies are going green again.

It's the kind of thing that happens when you're shut up in a poky attic in Ludlow, forced to live on Old Flatulence Bitter as dispensed from the Frog and Lilypad and write competitions all the time. Butterflies, that is. Green ones. (And a few other colours too, but we'd better not go into that here, had we?)

So, my lovlies, "What do you have to do to be in with a chance of having a Zany Day Out with the lads and lasses of Mastertronic?" I hear you mumble. Simple. Reproduced on this page is an unfinished cartoon strip, starring the Secret Agent With No Name.

All you have to do is complete the story. You could, if you felt you were a bit of a cartoon artist, draw a couple more frames. Or the rest of a comic book. If, on the other hand, your penmanship is not so hot, there's no reason why the story couldn't be finished off in written form. It's entirely up to you how you go about completing the story. Just do it before 20th February, and whizz your entry to AMTIX! CARTOON STRIP, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.







SPITFIRE 40

Mirrorsoft, £9.95 cass, £12.95 disk

This latest flight simulation release from Mirrorsoft puts you slap bang in the middle of the Battle of Britain period near the beginning of World War II. It features two separate screens, the view from the cockpit and the instrument panel, which both have to be used in conjunction to fly the plane.

The simulation has three modes which are presented to you on loading: practice flying, combat practice and proper combat. Practice puts you on the runway giving you the opportunity to take off, fly and land the Spitfire and generally get the feel of how the aircraft handles. In this mode there are no enemies present and gaining the skills of flying a Spitfire is of the essence. Taking off and landing isn't as difficult as is experienced in most simulators which makes it nice and easy to get into.

The two combat modes pit you against the enemy. Combat Practice puts you in the air directly behind an aircraft which can be shot down with ease, and that done, another one appears. Once you've brought down a few of the enemy they start to get smart and behave realistically, twisting and turning to avoid your machine gun fire. Sometimes they loop the loop and end up on your tail and start machine gunning you! You're alerted to an enemy behind you by the plane appearing in your rear mirror — a nice feature which adds realism to the simulator.

True combat mode puts you in a proper war situation. Starting on the airstrip you have to take off, seek and destroy the enemy using the map and on-screen details. Once you have shot down the enemy intruders you have to return to the airstrip and land safely. If the journey is a successful one then you can save your experiences on tape and go out on another interception run. These experiences can then be reloaded as a flight history the next time you play.

Whilst flying you can switch to the map screen to help you find where the enemy planes are. There are two maps, one of the south of England, the other close up of the area around the airfield. The enemy craft is usually shown on both of these and your plane is shown in relation to it.

The game can be controlled from the keyboard or joystick, although the bulk of the controls are done by using the keyboard (increase/decrease power switches, brakes, landing gear etc).

If you do well you earn promotion according to your flying experience and the number of kills you achieve. If you do really well it is possible to rise through the ranks rapidly and with great skill eventually be awarded the coveted position of Group Captain, VC, DSO, DFC.

Control keys: (plus key) up; (?) down; (A) left; (S) right; (SHIFT) fire; (Z) left rudder; (X) right rudder; (Q) increase power; (W) decrease power; (F) flaps; (SPACE) screen switch; (G) gear; (B) brakes; (M) map; (N) expand map.

CRITICISM

1 **This is an excellent simulator and is surely the best one yet written for the Amstrad. Some of the features are really great, like the use of the two screens to fly the plane, which although sounding rather daunting is easy to use and leaves a far bigger viewing screen enhancing the realism during a combat sequence. The graphics are very good indeed with fast update of the horizon, quite convincing 3D and an instrument panel which is a masterpiece. Getting enthusiastic about a flight sim is pretty difficult, but with its dog fight sequences it all becomes exciting to play and is consequently a program well worth buying — it certainly has durability!**

2 *Spitfire 40* wins the prize for being the first flying simulation on which I have ever shot down an enemy, not because it's easy, but because I thought it worthy of perseverance — it's the best flight simulator I've played on the Amstrad. The gameplay is not the normal slow trek around in the air, it is more like it should be — a constant fight to save Britain in a single Spitfire. The controls are well laid out which makes it very easy to get into and easier to take off than *Fighter Pilot*. The whole game is very addictive and allows a very large amount of manoeuvres, which certainly makes me recommend it to anybody even remotely interested in flying around the countryside.

3 *I seem to recall this doing rather poorly on the 64 early last year, but the Amstrad programmers have taken advantage of that time to polish the best bits (like the control graphics) and lift the game in general to an exciting and action packed simulation. Perhaps most importantly, this simulator is pretty easy to get into, with good instructions to aid the process. Enjoyable all round, great if you like flying simulations.*

Presentation 92%
Excellent instructions and documentation explaining how to fly the plane.

Graphics 86%
Smooth update and fabulous cockpit graphics.

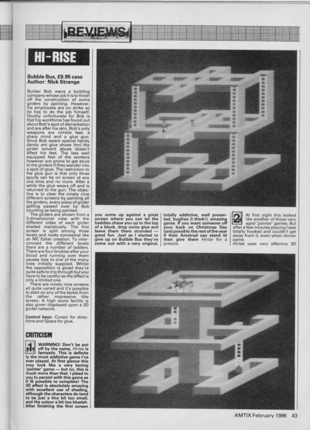
Sound 46%
RRRRR of the plane and a really naff title screen tune.

Playability 83%
Flying a simulator has never been such fun.

Addictive qualities 85%
Once a few experiences have been saved this becomes very compelling.

Value for money 82%
Expensive, but flight sim fanatics will be well pleased.

Overall 85%
An excellent program, and definitely the best flight simulator on the Amstrad.



HI-RISE

Bubble Bus, £8.95 cass
Author: Nick Strange

Builder Bob owns a building company whose job it is to finish off the construction of some girders by painting. However, his employees are on strike so he has to do the job himself. Doubly unfortunate for Bob is that his workforce has found out about Bob's spot of demarkation and are after his skin. Bob's only weapons are nimble feet, a sharp mind and a glue gun. Since Bob wears special handy dandy ant glue shoes (tm) the girder solvent abuse doesn't affect his feet. The less well equipped feet of the workers however are prone to get stuck to the girders if they wander into a spot of glue. The restriction to the glue gun is that only three spurts can be on screen at any one time and no more. After a while the glue wears off and is returned to the gun. The objective is to clear the ninety nine different screens by painting all the girders, every piece of girder getting passed over by Bob counting as being painted.

The girders are shown from a 3-dimensional view with the different sides of each girder shaded realistically. The first screen is split among three levels and looks somewhat like an MC Escher creation. To interconnect the different levels there are a number of ladders. There are four brickies after your blood and running over them causes loss to one of the many lives initially supplied. Whilst the opposition is glued they're quite safe to trip through but you have to be careful as the effect is only a limited one.

There are ninety nine screens all quite varied and it's possible to start on any of the levels from the rather impressive title screen. A high score facility is also given displayed upon a 3D girder network.

Control keys: Cursor for directions and Space for glue.

CRITICISM

1 **WARNING! Don't be put off by the name, *Hirise* is fantastic. This is definitely the most addictive game I've ever played. At first glance this may look like a very boring 'painter' game — but no, this is much more than that. I plead to you to persist with this game as it IS possible to complete! The 3D effect is absolutely amazing with excellent use of shading, although the characters do tend to be just a tiny bit too small, and the colour a bit too blueish. After finishing the first screen you come up against a great screen where you can let the baddies chase you up to the top of a block, drop some glue and leave them there stranded — great fun. Just as I started to give up on Bubble Bus they've come out with a very original, totally addictive, well presented, bugfree (I think!), amazing game. If you want someone off your back on Christmas Day (and possibly the rest of the year if their Amstrad can stand it) then give them *Hirise* for a pressie.**

2 At first sight this looked like another of those very aged 'painter' games. But after a few minutes playing I was totally hooked and couldn't get away from it, even when dinner came.

Hirise uses very effective 3D



shading which adds an extra delight to playing it — you never know where a ladder will pop up. The colouring of the blocks is very subtle complemented by some very beepy sound for footsteps. Due to the loads of different mazes to keep you going, this has proves to be one of the most addictive game I've played on the Amstrad lately. This fast, original game adds a new dimension to the phrase 'painter'.

3 *A great little game is* Hirise *and though a little graphically clumsy it's very addictive.* Hirise *is a bit similar to* Lode Runner *in concept. The men themselves are a slightly ill-defined and look a bit blocky. However, I really liked the way that you can start on any sheet as I found it hard to get past the first screen! Overall a really good game that deserves to succeed.*

Presentation 88%
Nice use of 3D and original conception but poor packaging.

Graphics 82%
Pretty neat backdrops but minute characters that are a bit awkwardly animated.

Sound 68%
A bit primitive though effective.

Playability 88%
Great fun though a little hard at first.

Addictive qualities 91%
Once the initial awkwardness is overcome, you're easily hooked.

Value for money 82%
An addictive game that provides above average value for money.

Overall 89%
A great little game that should provide entertainment for many a bored soul.

WINTER SPORTS

Electric Dreams, £8.95 cass
Author: Software Images

After such a glut of sports simulations on the whole range of home micros it seems only resonable to expect a winter version of the summer times sport sims that have flooded the software market. *Winter Sports* is such a product. Although presented on one cassette, the different events load in separate parts whilst keeping the player's overall performance in memory. The main menu gives a choice of the event that you want to start on. If you don't go through the different parts sequentially then it's best to make a note of the tape counter positions from where the different events load. The main menu also gives a variety of options applying to the separate games. It's from here you can select a two player mode or redefine the keyboard.

The first three events load in a single block and all are types of skiing. The first is the slalom, a down hill race against time, weaving between oncoming poles. There are two views of the course as you ski downhill. The left hand window is a skier's point of view the slope. The right right hand window shows a bird's eye picture of the course, showing the different sets of slalom poles and a trace of the skier's course to date. There are four controls over the skiier. Speed up, slow down, left and right. Even though the course is on a a steep slope it's possible to stop completely.

Next event is the Giant Slalom, very similar to the normal version except that once past the single gates a set of double poles present themselves to be skied through.

Downhill is another similar event with the same format as the others. Downhill requires the skier to get between all the double poles on the way down.

For all three events a display on the top two lines shows how many gates have been failed and the time taken so far. After you get bored with competing in the first three events there's an option to return to the main menu form where the next game can be loaded.

Other events each have to be loaded separately and next on the list is a conversion of Canada's favourite sport, Ice Hockey. The game takes place on a scrolling backdrop with a limited view of the pitch. At the top of the screen is a scanner showing the position of all the other members of different teams. As the puck moves around the main window scrolls accordingly. Four directional control is supplied plus a fire button to hit the puck. Control is automatically handed to the player nearest to the puck. There is a time limit to the match and it's played in quarters each lasting five minutes, and ends are changed every other period.

Speed skating is a joystick waggling game, the waggling providing the speed. Slightly strange is that left/right need to be waggle and up/down move you left and right across the course. The screen is split down the middle into two windows, one showing a rear view and the other representing a side shot. Time and distance left to race are shown on the top of the screen while the grandstand glides past in the background.

In a similar vein to the earlier events, the Ski Jump shows two differing perspectives. The left hand window shows a camera angle view directly down the jump while the right hand one gives a sideways representation of your man. To start the skier has to slide back and forth in the starting gate. Once skiing, the figure is shown moving through a number of positions as he glides through the air. Left and right can correct the jumper's attitude while in the air, and once he's at the end of the ramp the jump key has to be hastily bashed. Leave it too late and the skier tumbles. Get it just right and a careful bit of manipulation is needed to get a correct landing stance. Points are awarded for style.

Bobsled needs some careful speed control as whizzing around the corners too fast causes the sled and driver to fly off a corner. Presentation in *Winter Games* seems to be pretty consistent and, as most other events, Bobsled is shown with a split screen two view angle. First of the two views shows a cross section of the course with the rider sitting in the bowl of the track. As the player hurtles round corners the sled rises and falls up and down the sides of the wall. There's a speed control plus sled left and right. The second window displays the course from above, similar to the skiing events, with a line tracing the course the sled has taken. Bobsled is a race against time and overall speed is most important though some deceleration is needed when you approach corners.

Biathlon is a strange event combining both the skills of nordic skiing and shooting. Two screens show a picture of the course plus your position on it and a sideways picture of the skier taking part. This event involves quite a bit of long distance skiing with the odd target practice intervening. The different screens flip past as the man reaches the edge. On reaching a target you must react quickly as you only have a limited amount of time to hit the four targets. If all four targets are missed then a time penalty of two minutes is incurred. The sight of the gun moves up and down over each target in turn and you have to press fire at the right time.

Once all the events have been completed the high score table places you in your correct positions along with the world record holders.

Control keys: Definable.

CRITICISM

1 **After such prehype from Electric dreams, *Winter Sports* is really disap pointing. Words nearly fail me in describing how bad this game is, but not quite. The graphics are of a blandness not yet seen on the Amstrad. Even though each game is loaded separately they all look amazingly similar. The worst sin commited by *Winter Sports* is its slowness. Looking at what the program is trying to do there seems no reason why it should move at such a snail-like pace. There's only one thing I can constructively say about this release and that's 'don't buy it'.**

2 *Oh Dear I thought this might be good but how wrong I was. The first thing that strikes you is the time consuming loading of each section, but it does give you time to makes lots of cups of tea and recover from the terrible gameplay after every section. Most of the games are too hard to get into which consequently meant that they are easy to ignore and low in addictivity. In comparing all the games I found a very wide range of quality in graphics from stick men in the hockey to a big black skier on the jumping. The sound all round is very bad, containing only clicks and buzzes, beeps and burps. The actual concepts of each of the games is a very very bad copy of the Epyx classic. I feel that it is all too slow (especially the Biathlon) and constant loading makes the whole game dislikeable and extremely boring.* Winter Sports *definitely left me with a cold chill!*

Presentation 22%
Absolutely awful cassette handling to load in amazingly mediocre offerings.

Graphics 20%
Unpleasant blue coloured images with drearily similar presentation soon bores the eyes.

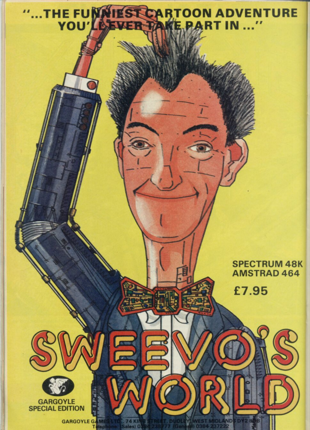
Sound 10%
Amateurish.

Playability 8%
All games are just so slow as to make them virtually unplayable.

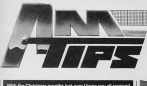
Addictive qualities 7%
It seems hard to imagine anyone going through the whole set of events more than once unless they particularly dislike themselves.

Value for money 15%
After hype-filled adverts, *Winter Games* is just so disappointing.

Overall 11%
Abstain from purchasing this to ensure no other similar offerings are released.



"...THE FUNNIEST CARTOON ADVENTURE YOU'LL EVER TAKE PART IN ..."
SPECTRUM 48K
AMSTRAD 464
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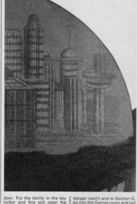


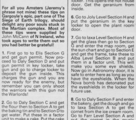
from Robin Candy

With the Christmas months just over I hope you all received what you wanted for Christmas along with plenty of Amstrad games. For those of you who are new to AMTIX! this column is the one that deals with any problems that you have while playing games, like how to open that door guarded by Skelebones in *Dragontorc*.

This month sees the first installment of tips for that great Gargoyle game, *Marsport*, for which more hints will be revealed next month. Also next month will appear some *Elite* tips and I hope to have something on *Sweevo's World* and *Yie Ar Kung Fu*.

If you've got any maps of particularly mega games then send them in and if we think there is a need for it, it may get published, and you would so love to see your name in print wouldn't you? — go on, admit it, you would. Okay enough of my mumblings, let's get on with the bits you really want to read — unless you're the sort of person who prefers to discover their own solutions, in which case I must warn you that the next pages contain material that may disturb you . . .





MARSPORT

For all you Amsters (Jeremy's phrase not mine) these tips on Gargoyle's epic, part one of The Siege of Earth trilogy, should delight any poor souls stuck in the Martian complex. Most of these tips were supplied by John McCann **of N Ireland, who took ages to write them out so you had better be grateful!**

1. First go to to Elis Section G and get gun permit. Now proceed to Daly Section D and put gun permit in key locker, take gun and go to charge locker to deposit the gun inside. This charges the gun and you are now ready for the enemy, but remember you can only shoot the warriors with this gun not the Warlords!

2. Go to Daly Section C and get the flour then to Section A to get the baking tin and to Section D to get water. Put these in a factor unit to make a cake. Put the cake in the key locker and the bakery is now open.

3. Now go to Daly Section G and get the charcoal. Once you have done this then go to Joly Section H and get the gauze. Take a chute to Iaxa level Section C and put these in factor unit. This will make a gas mask. Go through the danger door here and when bomb has exploded put gas mask in locker for future use.

4. Go to Iaxa Section G to the Map room, take Earth map to Section A (via the Gas Bomb). Go into the icecream room and get the ice pack. Go to Gill Level Section E, put the earth map in the key locker, this opens the soil depot.

5. Take ice pack to Gill Level Section C and put it in the key locker. This opens the hot house door. Get the geranium from inside.

6. Go to Joly Level Section H and put the geranium in the key locker to open the plant room door.

7. Go to Iaxa Level Section H and get the glass then go to Section G and enter the map room, get the sun chart and go to Section E and get the frame, take these to Alba Level Section B and put them in a factor unit. This will make you some eye shields. Now go in Astronomy door, it is safe to enter here as long as you have the eyeshields. When the Nova bomb has detonated put the eyeshields in the locker for future use.

8. Go to Daly Section F and enter the bakery, get the dough and go to Iaxa Section A to get the cornet from the ice cream room. Go to Farr Level Section A and put the cornet in the music room's key locker. This is now open. Get the lute from inside.

9. Go to Byer Section 1 and in through the oratory door, get the dais, go to Section E and put the dough in the key locker. This opens the banker door. Go through to Section A and put the dais and lute in factor unit. These will make the lead suit. Now go in danger door and once the radiation bomb has gone off put it in locker for future use. Go through to Section C.

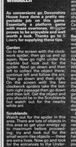
10. Go down to Joly level Section C via the South facing lift. Go in safety door and get the ear muffs and the boots. Go back up lift to Byer level Section C. Then go to Section A into the danger door. Put the bomb in the key locker and this will open the door to Section B. Go through to danger door in this section (Northern one). Go in when sonic bomb has gone off. Put the ear muffs in the locker.

11. Go to Daly Section C and put boots in the key locker. This now opens the Chemist door. Take the oxygen from inside, go to Alba level Section A and get the empty tank, go to Coma level Section A. Put these in factor unit and you will now receive an air tank. Go into the danger room once the Vacuum has gone and put the tank into the locker for future use.

12. Now go to Byer level Section E and get the calculating machines then go to Coma level Section B and get the steps, then go to Farr level (via the vacuum danger room) and to Section G, go into the Games room and put the steps and the calculators in factor unit. You now have a snakes and ladders game. Put this in the key locker and the door will unlock to Section C.

13. Go to Alba Section D and into the Director room, get the first key to m-central. Go to Byer Section E and into the banker door, get key 2. Then go to Farr Section G and get key 3. Take these through to Section C and take the down lift to Hale level (at last). Go to Section H and put key 2 in Southernist locker and key 3 in other one. M central door between these is now unlocked. Go through and into Section E and into the Sanctum door. You have now completed Phase 1, so you've only got two more phases to puzzle over. Until next month it's up to you.

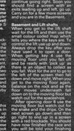
WRIGGLER



As conversions go Devonshire House have done a pretty respectable job on this game. Essentially a platform game with maze overtones, *Wriggler* proves to be enjoyable and well worth a look. Thanks go to S Lawry **for supplying these tips.**

Garden
Go to the screen with the clockwork spider, then go up and up again. Now go right under the marble but look out for the spider. Next go down and then left to collect the object there; continue left and follow the ant. Then go down and then right. On the screen with the two clockwork spiders take the bottom right passage then go down and then left. Get the object and you should be in the Scrublands but watch out for the nearby white ant.

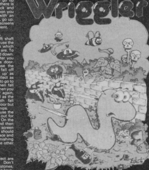
Scrublands
Watch out for the spider in this area. There are lots of objects in this area so get your energy up to maximum before proceeding; try and look out for the small worm-like objects — these are extra lives. Now go and look for the entrances to the Underground. If you cannot find these then just follow these directions: From the screen with the Scarecrows go down and then right. Don't go through the screen with the wasp. Keep on going right, past the vertical entrance to the underground and on the next screen go up and then right because there is an object. Now go back and continue going right. Soon you should find a screen with an exits leading up and left, go up. Carry on for a few more screens and you are in the Basement.



Basement and Lift shafts
When you get to the lift shaft wait for the lift and then use the small colour coded map which tells you where the keys are. To control the lift use up and down. Always drop the key after you have used it to open a door. When getting key 4 use the moving floor until you fall off and be ready with 'pick up' as there is an object to collect as you fall. Wait for the ant to go to the left of the screen then fall down and move right. When you get to the moving floor again, balance on the rock and as the floor moves underneath fall down on to the moving floor but watch out for the spaceships.

After opening door 8 use the moving floor but watch out for the snake and the drips. On the next screen go down and then go right to end up in a screen with a red blockade. You should have now finished the race and you will be told your finishing position in relation to the other maggots.

General tips
The best objects to collect are food and extra lives. Don't bother collecting grave stones, parachutes or the skeleton keys.



FIGHTING WARRIOR

So *Fighting Warrior* isn't megafabipoosbrill on the Amstrad as far as I'm concerned but who cares if all you want is a game in which you can beat hell out of anything that moves (or attempts to move) so if you own this game then thank Alan Charles **of West Yorkshire who has sent in these set of tips about what to hit and why.**

The main trick for success in this game is to use the vases that appear on the floor. If you smash a vase with a lower strike then you or your opponent can be affected in different ways. There is a sequence of eight.

1. Make the next enemy one of the nasty winged creatures.
2. Add six points to your stamina.
3. Kill the current enemy.
4. Subtract six points from your stamina.
5. Every time the enemy hits you it knocks a point off his stamina.
6. Add 500 bonus points to your score.
7. Kill the current enemy.
8. Subtract six points from your stamina.

So it is advisable to smash vases 2, 3, 5, 6 but avoid the rest. Suppose a vase on screen is not one that you want, then walk backwards until it has disappeared and then walk forwards, the next vase to appear will be the next one in the sequence. This way you make steady but slow progress. When fighting with the enemy it is best to use the mid stroke as this takes less time to perform. Once you have come across Cleopatra's needle and the Sphinx for a second time a vase appears that is higher than the others. If you smash this then the temple door will appear, inside here you will meet one of those winged creatures that guards the princess.

Every time you strike inside the temple you lose one stamina point but the creature inside has the same stamina as the one outside. The trick is to almost kill the one outside, then strike the vase and rush in. Once you have killed the creature run across to the princess before the second monster has time to appear. You then get the final graphic display and the game ends.

Generally it is not worth avoiding the arrows because the process of doing so gives your enemy time to get plenty of hits in. Should you be using the 'shield' (vase 6) then it is best to avoid the arrows.

STARION

Here it is — the final block of the Starion **revealed courtesy of** Tim Dawson **of Farnham Common. The final anagram you will have to work out for yourselves (surely you can do that) because Tim wouldn't tell me that one!**

BLOCK 3 GRID 1
AD 1909: WING — Bleriot puts channel under his
AD 1899: ELGAR — He varies an enigma
AD 1934: KNIVES — Hitler's long weapons in the night
AD 0032: FISH — Five for five thousand
AD 1967: OXYGEN — Too much in Apollo fire
AD 1977: AMIN — Ugandan mass murder
AD 1977: MULL — Winged wine of Kintire
AD 1614: ROMEO — Where for art thou
BC 0790: REMUS — Romulus' twin
GRID PASSWORD: FRAMEWORK

BLOCK 3 GRID 2
AD 1954: BANNISTER — Roger, smile upstairs in four minutes
AD 1939: RHESUS — Levine and Stetons monkey blood factor
AD 1982: HARRIER — 'Counted them all out' from Invincible
AD 1948: LP — Goldmark gives

forty — five minutes
BC 0747: ICARUS — He flies discreetly on melting wings
AD 1938: AUSTRIA — Germany's new annexe
AD 1926: YOYO — Come — come to Donald Duncan's new toy
AD 1855: NIGHTINGALE — Hygenic Lady from Berkley Square to Crimea
AD 1959: TARMAC — Surface the M one
GRID PASSWORD: LABYRINTH

BLOCK 3 GRID 3
AD 1935: MONOPOLY — Exclusive board game is born
AD 1948: PROGRAM — Instructions first stored in Manchester mark one
AD 1927: SOUND — First thing about the Jazz singer
AD 1943: ENIGMA — Colossal code for the first computer
AD 1923: AUTOGIRO — Juan de la Cierva's C four flew
AD 1976: TROWEL — Help a Viking dig holes in Mars
AD 1825: LOCOMOTION — Everybody's doing it with George Stephenson
AD 1877: CYLINDER — Edison's sound medium
AD 1429: ORLEANS — Joan of Arc's relief
GRID PASSWORD: ECTOPLASM

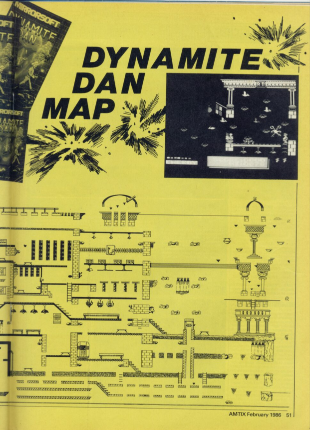
BLOCK 3 GRID 4
AD 1947: YEAGER — Chuck Supersonic in Glamerous (sic) Glennis
AD 1877: EIGHTS — Dead hot university rowing crews
AD 1982: RINK — T and D's stage at Lake Placid
AD 1936: TELEVISION — Watch the BBC
AD 1953: DNA — Deoxyribonucleic acid
BC 9999: EDEN — Adam and Eve's garden
AD 1865: ALICE — She adventures in Wonderland
AD 1851: SINGER — Choral first sewing machine
AD 1781: YORKTOWN — British surrender the war of independence here
GRID PASSWORD: YESTERDAY

BLOCK 3 GRID 5
AD 1861: GATLING — Name his machine gun
AD 1967: BARNARD — His first change of heat
AD 1665: TRIANGLE — Pascal's binomial shape
BC 0790: ROMULAS — Twin of Remus in Rome
AD 1927: LOUIS — Lindenbergh's Transatlantic saintly spirit
AD 1979: IRAN — Khomeini's country
AD 1931: EMPIRE — Tallest building in a state
BC 2905: MEMPHIS — Capital of Egypt, not Tennesse
AD 1909: NORTH — Peary's pole
GRID PASSWORD: TREMBLING

BLOCK 3 GRID 6
AD 1960: PSYCHO — Hitchcock's madman
AD 1942: CASABLANCA — 'Play it again Sam'
AD 1929: HOOVER — Damned good President
AD 1859: OIL — Crude discovery in Pennsylvania
AD 1981: HELENS — Saintly mountain erupts
AD 1921: ORANGES — Prokofiev loves three
AD 1872: STANLEY — Meets 'Doctor Livingstone', I presume
AD 1949: COMET — Imploding Jet airliner
AD 1972: TERRORIST — Munich spoil sport
GRID PASSWORD: HOP SCOTCH

BLOCK 3 GRID 7
AD 1901: RAGTIME — Tatty beat in jazz
AD 1605: FAWKES — Guy with the gun powder
AD 1948: TRANSISTOR — Walter Britain's tiny amplifier
AD 1770: EQUATOR — Captain Cook crosses this line to Australia
AD 1280: VISA — Marco Polo's credit for entry permit
AD 1937: NYLON — Synthetic fibres from New York and


MIRRORSOFT
DYNAMITE
DAN


DYNAMITE
DAN
MAP
MIRRORSOFT
DYNAMITE
DAN

London
AD 1634: OBERAMMERGAU — Passion plays begin here
AD 1928: AMBER — Missing traffic light
BC 9999: WHEEL — Fundamental invention
GRID PASSWORD: WAVEFRONT

BLOCK 3 GRID 8
AD 1839: OPIUM — Indian subject of Anglo—Chinese war
AD 1952: MOUSETRAP — Agatha's new play
AD 1816: ROSSINI — His barber is in Seville
AD 1883: LIBERTY — French statue for America
AD 0664: WHITBY — Celtic church vanishes at north coast synod
AD 1960: APARTHIED — Cause of the Sharpsville massacre
AD 1884: EGG — Faberge lays his first for the Csar
AD 1945: NUREMBERG — City of Nazi trials
AD 1875: WEBB — Captain swims the channel
GRID PASSWORD: LAWNMOWER

BLOCK 3 GRID 9
AD 1899: ALPHA — Rutherford's first ray
AD 0121: STONE — Build Hadrian's wall
AD 1536: MONK — Henry's dissolving victim
AD 1714: FARENHEIT — Gabriel's temperature scale
AD 1958: NAUTILUS — It's twenty thousand leagues under the sea
AD 1859: ORIGIN — Darwin's beginning
AD 1885: RABIES — Pasteur fights hydrophobia
AD 1926: ROCKET — Goddard's is liquid fuelled
AD 1974: TAPE — Watergate recording
GRID PASSWORD: TRANSFORM
BLOCK PASSWORD: TWELFTHLY
FINAL PASSWORD: AEMSTY (that is the anagram but you should work it out yourselves).

DRAGONTORC

Due to my space allocation, this month's installment of the *Dragontorc* solution is somewhat smaller than I had hoped but (as I'm always being told) you all should be working it out for yourselves anyway.

Once inside the Vaults of Locris, open the locked door with the Sunkey. Now search the tomb with the servant spell and you will find the 'UNDO' spell. In the next screen avoid the fireballs and use BANE to kill the nearby wraith. The doorway to the room with the crown in it is cursed. So use the UNDO spell to remove the curse otherwise as soon as you enter the room you will automatically be transported to a room which used to have spiders. Once you have removed the curse (a moon symbol appears), use the UNDO spell again to release the crown and take it. Now use the RETURN spell and place the crown on the anvil and destroy it with the crystal of antithought. You can take the gold remnants for trading with elves.

SPY Vs SPY

Definitely one of the best games currently out on the Amstrad this, and well worth getting. However, if you already have the game then these hints from Charlie Brooker of Brightwell—Cum—Sotwell (yeah, I've never heard of it either) may help. There again it isn't the world's hardest game to play.

good strategy to use is to put any secret objects into one specific room and then Booby Trap just in case the other spy enters there. It is also a good idea to make sure YOU have a remedy for the trap close at hand should you need to go into that room again.

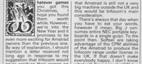
Normally when the computer's spy dies he reappears in the room where you start. So a good idea is to run quickly into that room and booby trap one of the doors, set a time bomb, run out and booby trap the other door. When the black spy reappears he will happily rummage around the room and if he doesn't get killed by the time bomb then he certainly will be killed by one of the booby trapped doors.

Should you wish to make the game a lot easier here's a good solution; when you are on the selection screen make sure that the airport door is shown throughout the game. Now start the game. Go and look for the room with the the airport door in it and leave the black spy to find all the necessary objects while you booby trap the door that give access to the room with the airport door. When the black spy has found all the objects he will then go to the room that you are in but as soon as he tries to enter it he will be killed by one of the booby traps that you have hidden. Once the spy is dead all his objects will be dropped in the room where he died so you can now and go and pick them all up and escape.

Jeremy what do you mean I've only got three pages this month? I could go on forever. Alright there's no need to threaten me, everybody knows you're bigger than me anyway. Jeremy says No More (sounds like a bit of Paul Moreley hype to me, we may even get 'Jeremy Says' T-shirts printed) so that means I've got to stop. After all what Big J says goes (eh Liddon?). If you've got any tips info or maps then forward them to me at: AMTIPS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB. See you next month.



MARCH CHEERFULLY OUT OF OBSCURITY AND INTO THE DREAM



Whatever games you got this Christmas, I hope you found them worth while. However, we're into the New Year and it promises to be even more exciting for Amstrad owners than the previous one. By way of explanation, I should mention a letter received not long ago in response to my suggestion that Infocom would never produce their games on the Amstrad range of micros. The reader was upset by this and suggested that we contact Infocom and persuade them otherwise. Well, my reasoning was that Amstrad is still not a very big machine outside the UK and this would be Infocom's main consideration.

There's always that day when you have to eat your words, however (I mean, Big J consumes entire NEC portable keyboards in a single gulp). To the point then. Softsel are taking advantage of the CPM abilities of the Amstrad to produce the Infocom range under license in the UK. If that doesn't make everybody happy, I don't know what will. So guess what? We've got ourselves a special Infocom section this month with everything released so far, reviewed. Hope you find something to suit your tastes . . .

SOULS OF DARKON

Taskset, £8.90 cass

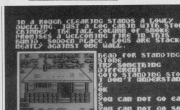




Unusual settings for adventure games seem hard to find at the moment. *Souls of Darkon* however, represents something of a refreshing change from this trend. The plot is set on a strange world where technology and mysticism exist together in uneasy balance. Magic and science may be simultaneously employed to good effect. Even the screen display tries (successfully) to take advantage of this mysterious atmosphere.

At the top of the screen is a descriptive passage, telling you the basic details of a location. Below this and to the left, is the graphic display. This is something of a departure from the norm in itself. The graphics are drawn in high-res on yellow paper. They have been delicately and cleverly implemented and work very well as a result. To the right of this is the 'action window' where responses to inputs are dealt with. Inventory and even vocabulary details are available here (the latter not being particularly novel but nevertheless under-rated in terms of usefulness). Finally, there's an input area at the bottom of the screen. The character set used is different to say the least and adds that extra touch to make the game appear a little more impressive.

Something very strange is going on in this world. All the blame can be aimed squarely at the feat of your typical baddie. Well, more obligatory than typical, actually. The exploration of this unusual environment and gradual buildup to an inventive climax make this an enjoyable adventure. I'm not too sure if the author was inspired by any particular science-fantasy author (there were overtones of Philip K Dick — but the author probably disagree), but if his work is the result of his own inspiration, I wouldn't mind seeing him do a novel.



You meet a happy little companion early on your travels as well. He's called Komputa (yes, a bit tacky that) but despite name and appearances (he's a floating sphere with arms) he's actually useful and not just a gimmick. Interaction with other characters met during the game is necessarily limited but this is no problem as the game's strong points lie elsewhere.

The problems faced are original and nowhere have I found any to be contrived. Although the parser was simple, the ability to call the vocabulary for reference soon helped me out of the odd interaction problem, which is why I said earlier, such a feature is often under-rated. The author should be proud of creating such an interesting and thoughtfully crafted game. True, it does have its faults. Input was sometimes slow and the vocabulary itself is fairly small, giving the impression from time to time that actions are needlessly repetitive.

The only other thing about this game, I don't like is its apparent size. True, I haven't completed it but I think that the end is not far off. It has some great elements but there is that feeling that perhaps the whole thing will be over by the time you're really getting into it. Otherwise the game is unpretentious and pleasant to play. The display doesn't look too gimmicky and the nature of the puzzles will keep the hardiest of adventurers busy for some time to come. Add this one to your collection.

Atmosphere 87%
Plot 84%
Interaction 86%
Lastability 68%
Value for money 80%
Overall 82%

SEAS OF BLOOD

Adventure International, £9.95 cass

Seas of Blood represents something of a departure from Adventure Internatioanl's standard offering in that it is an adaptation of one of the new **Fighting Fantasy** stories by prolific authors Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone. Instead of a simply described central character, the player has several characteristics, namely Skill (which represents fighting ability), Stamina (when this is reduced to zero, you're dead) and Provisions (actually, this is more a part of the inventory and of use only on board the ship — but I'm getting ahead of myself).

You play the part of a pirate from the notorious city of Tak, a haven for many of your kind (inspired perhaps by the famous *Thieves' World* stories). As captain of the pirate ship, Banshee, you lead a mission to scourge the Inland Sea in an attempt to gain treasure. The object of the game is to acquire twenty treasures and take them to the top of the mountain on Nippur at the Southern end of the Inland Sea.

The game begins onboard the ship though it is possible to leave this by various means when the ship is in sight of land. Moving the ship is a simple process as orders such 'Sail South' are all that's necessary. When combat commences, the game changes from standard Adventure International type input and goes straight into 'FF' mode, right down to the dice rolling that would be necessary when playing one of the gamebooks — except of course, that all the dice rolling takes place on the screen and is handled directly by the program.

No Adventure International release is complete nowadays without the obligatory graphics by the ubiquitous Brian Howarth and *Seas of Blood* is no exception. These, as might be expected by those familiar with AI, are of an extremely high standard and comparable only to the quality of graphics in Interceptor's games. Howarth has not failed to take advantage of the Amstrad's superb graphics capabilities. Atmospheric shading and attention to detail help absorb the player in the game. By comparison, text description is sparse and unhelpful. This is not really a criticism, more of an observation. Detailed descriptions would be somewhat redundant given the presence of the graphics.

Unfortunately, Adventure International seem to have fallen into the usual trap of making the dialogue contrived and awkward and interaction suffers enormously as a result. The fact that Adventure International are so successful despite the fact that these problems exist in all of their games (to a lesser or greater extent) seems to suggest that the public are relatively unconcerned by this. I find this quite remarkable as it does detract from the player's enjoyment of the game.

It can be argued that AI provide a good plot to make up for this shortcoming and in many cases this is true. However, *Seas of Blood* has no such saving grace. The plot as is seems fairly weak and the player has the constant impression that AI have put their faith in the dice rolling gimmick and the association with Fighting Fantasy. While the dice rolling helps a player get into the game and does appear to be an interesting feature at first, the novelty soon wears off and you are left feeling that valuable memory could have been used elsewhere to enhance the game. After that, a mechanical process of going through the motions to find the treasures and transport the booty soon sets in.

The odd surprise and touch of humour does something to re-

kindle interest but as usual, when faced with a problem, the player cannot help but wonder whether difficulties are a due to subtleties of game play or just the limitations of the parser. In many cases it turns out to be due to the latter.

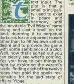
If you happen to be a fan of the Fighting Fantasy range, then perhaps the somewhat channeled nature of this game wont bother you too much. Even so, I would rather recommend the book itself. Far less outlay and no waiting while the game loads. To be fair though, I appreciate many people are understandably captivated by Adventure International's impressive use of graphics and that is always an attraction worth considering. But for seasoned adventurers, I can only suggest that this one is allowed to pass you by and sail uneventfully into the sunset.

Atmosphere 63%
Plot 55%
Interaction 53%
Lastability 58%
Value for money 57%
Overall 57%



RUNES OF ZENDOS

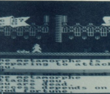
Dorcas, £8.95 , cass



This is an animated graphic adventure with text input. The plot is that a small principality used to exist in peace and harmony until the inevitable 'Evil Wizard' came along and cast a spell on the land, dooming it to perpetual darkness for no apparent reason other than to fill his own selfish desire and to provide the game with some semblance of a plot. Well, now that's sorted out you can clearly see what's coming. Yes you have to put things to right by exploring the wizard's castle, finding each of the twelve runes that gold the spells responsible for the sad state of affairs. Yipee.

If the plot is hackneyed and out of date, wait till you see the animation. It's not very pleasant at all. Characters are chunky, ill defined and wobble embarrassingly across the screen. Considering the sixteen colour mode was chosen, I can only imagine the game was designed entirely on a green screen machine as any attempt to provide a little more life with the use of colour was obviously avoided with miraculous ease.

Interaction is another area which seems to have escaped the final version of the game. Two word input positively stretches the interpretive limits of the program and some of the most frequently employed terminology in adventuring seem to be a taboo subject as well. Don't hope for anything as neat as a split screen either. Bulky characters, set against different coloured backgrounds depending on the context (ah, that's where the colours went — subtle) glide up the screen in just the same way that bricks don't every time you struggle against all your instincts to save electricity and turn the computer off and input another fruitless command.



Killing things is quite good fun (I know that's morbid but it's also true). It's fortunate as well in that there aren't many other things to do. Watching the Amstrad's screen display cripple itself in a desperate attempt to crash before showing the hilarious fight sequences which are invariably followed by such exquisitely clumsy dialogue as, 'You have killed the nimble cheeky elf.' It's the kind of thing that just makes you crave for an equivalent of the Golden Turkey Awards for the software industry.

I'm told that when this game was released on the Spectrum, our sister magazine, CRASH, gave it quite a good review. I can only assume it was inadequately converted to the Amstrad. The overall impression seems to be that the game is aimed at the younger player. To a degree, this may justify some of the apparent banality. Even so, I see no reason why the younger members of the computer gaming fraternity should be patronising and even less is there any excuse for obviously abysmal programming.

There are one or two good features. Error messages are well highlighted for the player's attention and depending on the entrance to the castle chosen by the player, the locations of the runes are altered to allow varied play. Unfortunately, that is all I have to say to compliment the game. The game allows the use of magic and takes into consideration the importance of eating to maintain the health of the character. Yet all these things are lost in the midst of an overwhelmingly forgettable game.

Atmosphere 8%
Plot 7%
Interaction 12%
Lastability 9%
Value for money 6%
Overall 6%

A marvellous new Adventure Epidemic is about to break for Amstrad disk drive owners . . .

FOR MINDS FOREVER VOYAGING

An Introduction to Infocom on the Amstrad by Sean Masterson who reviews the games with Gary Penn



Well, they took some getting but they finally arrived. And just for you, I'm burning the midnight oil to put together this very special review section. 'What am I talking about?' The INFOCOM games of course. Softsel, distributors of specialist software from the US have been playing with the idea of producing the giant American company's games on the Amstrad for some time now, but this week it appeared they had finally done the job.

However, before you run out and buy them, there are one or two problems you should know about. When I first rang Softsel, they told me that some games were ready and they would gladly send them out for review. But the days passed and nothing materialised so I phoned them again. This time there was a problem with the CPM conversions that couldn't be explained by the person who was dealing with the request (not her fault) and the versions they had ready would run on the PCW 8256 only! Knowing I could get access to one of these, I said this would be fine and they could send me those.

Days passed.

Eventually, when the deadline was looming and they said that they should be on their way shortly, I assumed the deadline would be missed. Later that day, a courier arrived from Cheltenham with the games! I wouldn't mind but Softsel are in London. Ah well. True, they wouldn't run on anything other than the PCW 8256. For a few minutes before we converted them to the 6128 that is! Be warned. Until Softsel announce otherwise, the games reviewed here are only usable if you have a PCW 8256 or at least have access to one and can convert them to CPC 6128 (CPM Plus) format. 664 and 464 owners with Amstrad's earlier CPM versions will have to wait.

Even then they are not perfect. They are not configured for the PCW's ninety column screen (though that is no problem). And there is a slight glitch in the display which results in your current location and score being shown in an apparently peculiar layout after every move, whereas they should, in fact, be sitting on the top line of the screen and updated from there. Otherwise the games work in an identical fashion to other versions. The disk handling on all the games is slightly slower than expected (as all INFOCOM games use frequent disk access) but still acceptable. Still, these versions are going to be tidied some more, so don't worry about that.

All INFOCOM adventures are text only, but do not suffer because of this as the quality and depth of the location descriptions are so good and convincing that you don't need graphics. Something else that puts INFOCOM adventures head and shoulders above other text adventures is the brilliant interpreter used and the incredible array of responses. Combined, these mean you can almost have a full blown conversation with an INFOCOM adventure! You can type in a complete sentence and still receive a coherent and sensible reply or result, or both.

The important thing to remember when reading the rest of this column is that because **every** implementation of an INFOCOM game is identical, no matter which machine it runs on, once the versions of the games released for the Amstrad were seen, it was possible to review accurately some other titles based on versions for the Commodore and Atari.

To review the entire range in one fell swoop would be unfair, however. For one, it would leave me without the chance to review them as they came out for the Amstrad (and in doing so, some readers would inevitably wonder what was happening if they missed this review). Secondly, there is always the chance that certain games may not be released on the Amstrad (though there is no immediate reason why this should be the case). And finally, I would need far more space than is currently available (and that's as good an excuse to keep you waiting as any).

The exception to this is in the *Zork* reviews. As *Zork I* has already been released, Softsel are obliged to bring out the next two parts of the trilogy in the near future. It seems to make sense, therefore, to treat them as a whole. Other 'stand alone' games may turn out to be another matter altogether. Apart from the second two parts of the *Zork* series then, all the games reviewed below are available on the Amstrad.

ZORK I, II and III

The Zork games have generally been regarded as THE text adventures for some time now and all three have been personal favourites of mine for just as long. The three *Zorks* are all interlinked adventures in as much as the end of *Zork* leads to the beginning of *Zork II* and then on to *III* but each can be played as a separate game without losing any individual appeal.

Zork allows you to explore the Great Underground Empire of Zork and all its secrets. You start outside an old, dilapidated house next to a forest. Getting into, and exploring, the rather small house leads to more than a lantern and sword, for it is the gateway to the Underground Empire itself! Below ground you will encounter a rather nasty troll, an even nastier thief and Hades itself with its foul inhabitants! There is a tricky, twisty maze holding several secrets

within its multitude of passages. Then there's the great dam, needing careful attention — but does it still work?

There are many magical things in *Zork*, all manufactured by a legendary company known as Frobozz. These devices are all extremely useful and it's necessary to figure out their uses to complete the game. A wealth of other objects and treasures are to be found, amongst them the jewel encrusted egg whose secret has been the breaking point of many a fearless explorer. All treasures must be taken back to the house and placed in the trophy cabinet therein. Collecting all twenty treasures and successfully returning them to the case earns you maximum points and finishes the game . . . Or does it?

Zork is packed full of excellent and atmospheric descriptions, some superb fight sequences, responses and above all a very wide vocabulary. Puzzles are numerous, tough and sometimes humourous and overall make this a difficult and enjoyable adventure to crack.

Zork II, as stated previously, starts off where *Zork* finished and lying at your feet are to be found a strangely familiar sword and lamp. Any major similarities, however, stop there, since *Zork II* deals more with magic and has fewer locations but more depth. Again, location descriptions are lengthy and detailed, and unsurpassed by any other brand of adventure, as is the case with the massive and impressive vocabulary. As with *Zork I*, there are numerous objects to be found and manipulated, but there are fewer treasures to collect and the way that they are used to finish the game is more devious.

The locations range from a gazebo in a beautiful garden (complete with an elusive unicorn) to mist filled rooms and a rather volatile volcano. Once a small problem involving a large bucket is solved, some interesting and dynamic cakes are to be found along with a very useful, but servile, robot (manufactured by Frobozz of course). An extremely bored dragon lurks below ground and it takes a bit of persuading to move him (or her: this is no time to be sexist). This leads to the discovery of many other items, amongst them a beautiful princess (who's a materialist and mercenary at heart, so don't get too romantic), some more treasures and more trouble. There is a strangely constructed maze to navigate, the solution to which isn't that obvious due to Americanisms on the part of the programmers (well they *do* come from the United States of America).

Occasionally the Wizard of Frobozz makes an appearance and casts a spell upon you, which always begins with an 'F'. This usually affects you in some way, so it's best to wait around for a while until eventually it wears off. The tables turn however, when you later acquire the self-same wand and put it to good use. Finishing *Zork II* is quite a bit trickier than *Zork I* but it follows the familiar INFOCOM approach with a similar sort of humour, quality and excellent atmosphere.

Zork III is the finale of the trio and starts effectively where *Zork II* ends and is quite a bit different from its predecessors in both scoring and play. The object of *Zork III* is to become the Dung-



eon Master and rule Frobozz Enterprises Unlimited. This requires considerably more skill than the other *Zorks* and you can't buy your way to the top here! Whereas before, scoring was into hundreds of points, in *Zork III* you can only get a maximum of seven points because they are only awarded for certain events.

Zork III combines a few of the locations and objects from the first two with a totally new and original scenario. The lamp is here and so are several other objects including the sword, which can't be taken at the start since it has become embedded in rock. There is a bit more magic involved and in general the puzzles are a lot harder and in some cases, more obscure than before. The locations number fewer than in previous *Zorks* although they are as highly detailed and atmospheric as usual, blending well with INFOCOM's excellent parser and multitudinous responses.

Although a lot harder to complete than the other two *Zorks*, it is by no means any less fun to play. All three adventures offer such exceptionally high quality, and should be snapped up instantly by those amongst you who have yet to sample such exquisite delights. I thoroughly recommend any of the INFOCOM range, especially the *Zorks*, and justice cannot be done to these excellent examples of text only adventure in such small space. If you don't own a disk drive and get bitten by an INFOCOM adventure at a disk-owning friend's house, you won't want to play anything else, as the bug that is in many people's blood will have finally found its way into yours — and Amstrad will almost certainly have gained another disk drive owner!

DEADLINE

Deadline is the first in INFOCOM's 'Mystery Series' of adventures (*Witness* and *Suspect* being the the other two) and gives you the chance to play out the role of an infamous detective, who has been called in to investigate the death of one Mr Robner.

The Chief of Detectives, Warren Coates, is completely convinced that there was no foul play involved, but he wants you to conduct a more thorough investigation all the same, since people are, after all, suspicious by nature. It turns out, from the Inspector's Casebook provided in the package, that Mr Robner had called the CoD a few days before his demise to inform him that he was altering his will. In fact, Robner was in the process of sending the relevant papers to the CoD when this unfortunate incident happened. Such mitigating circumstances can only cast aspersions over a verdict of 'death by a self administered overdose', so just how **did** Mr Robner come to meet such a cruel fate? Before a suspect can actually be arrested though, you must be able to prove they had the motive, opportunity and are lacking in an alibi.

. . . and you've only got twelve hours, computer time, to do so!

You begin your investigations outside the Robner house on the South lawn. On attempting to vacate the premises you are told that **Leaving the estate would mean quitting the case and, most probably, your job.** Hmmm! It looks as if you're here to stay . . .

A search of the surrounding vicinity proves successful, with the discovery of two strange holes in the ground and the fact that the eccentric gardener, Mr Angus McNabb, doesn't appreciate people treading on his roses. He also objects quite strongly to being hit 'with a lethal blow of the hand', as he does expire quite easily. 'Perhaps,' you think, 'I shouldn't have done that,' responds the computer, after a lengthy piece of text is given describing your arrest for the murder of Mr McNabb!

When you actually question the gardener to find out what's wrong, he burbles on and on about his roses and the influence that the bad weather is having on them! Some help! These responses are typical of not only this adventure, but of all INFOCOM classics. This is the sort of thing, along with massive vocabularies and detailed location descriptions, that makes their text adventures so much better than anyone else's. For example, kissing someone in *Deadline* is met with: 'Section 204D, Paragraph 7.6 of the Connecticut Police Code of Conduct specifically prohibits kissing suspects!'

If there are any words that the program doesn't understand, you are told 'You don't need the word " " to solve this mystery.' — typical of the sort of imaginative reply that one can expect to get when playing an INFOCOM game, as even the most inconceivable of questions are met with coherent answers. Another example is the reaction to any attempt to arrest yourself. Sergeant Duffy, your side-kick, strokes his chin and replies 'Excuse me, sir, but it would cause a bit of a stir at the station to be charging a player with murder!'

At 11.00 am, an interesting letter addressed to Mrs Robner arrives, full of suspicious comments about her late husband and a fellow called George, ending up: 'See you Friday as usual, Steven'. Sounds as if this could be important and incriminating evidence!

Quickly looking around the house gives rise to more suspicion as there are plenty of clues to be found. With aroused curiosity and some information under your belt, you decide it's high time to follow, and maybe question, a few people and start to draw some conclusions. As an aid to your enquiries there are a number of helpful words present in the vocabulary. **EXA-**



MINE is as useful as ever and so is **SEARCH**, although this command has been improved quite a bit to suit the game. Not only is it possible to **SEARCH** someone or something in a straightforward manner, but you can **SEARCH NEAR** an object or person. This usually provides more information than a simple **EXAMINE**.

FINGERPRINT asks the police laboratory to compare the fingerprints of someone/thing with those on file at the lab (that is, if something is **worth** fingerprinting — most, nay **all**, of the suspects object to this treatment unfortunately), while **ANALYZE** results in a lab performing a routine check on something.

Interaction with the other characters in the game is high, as you can freely converse with, and question, anyone in any way, should they be willing to talk to you. For example, **MRS JONES, TELL ME ABOUT MRS ROBNER, HEY, MR MCNABB "WHAT'S WRONG?", MRS ROURKE, SHOW ME THE FOOD** and other such communications all elicit useful, and sometimes humourous, responses. This sort of flexibility makes *Deadline* absorbing and rewarding to play. One really excellent feature is the **WAIT** command. It's possible to **WAIT FOR** or **WAIT UNTIL** certain times or even to **WAIT FOR** someone!

The location descriptions are incredibly informative and one needs little imagination to conjure up an image of their surroundings. When in the garden for instance, you can almost smell McNabb's damned roses!

When you finally decide that you have gathered substantial evidence, you should firstly **ACCUSE** your suspect, and then **ARREST** him or her. Get it right though — your job won't mean much if you don't as you'll end up losing it! *Deadline* is a most unusual approach to a text adventure and is one of INFOCOM's most absorbing to play yet.

HITCH HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

Like the other INFOCOM gameen on the rare occasions when it has nothing to offer, it comes up with a suitable response such as 'That section of data was destroyed during an office party last night.'

As is the case with all INFOCOM adventures, the packaging of *Hitch Hikers* is absolutely superb. Included in its price, amongst other things, are perilsensitive sunglasses (which are always black!) and pocket fluff!

I did not look too becoming in the peril-sensitive sunglasses, which are supposed to protect your eyes from any sort of horror by turning completely opaque at the first sign of danger . . . not the sort of thing a keen and fearless adventurer like me should wear. Mind you, throughout the game you could well do with a pair of these zany specs.

You begin the adventure playing the role of Arthur Dent who wakes up on the worst day of his life with a tremendous hangover. An aspirin, and a few more moments of exploration later and you discover that you are in the same situation as in the start of the Douglas Adams book — a bulldozer is about to knock down your house, and, more importantly, a fleet of Vogon ships are about to destroy the Earth to clear the way for an interstellar bypass.

Early problems include how to avoid being killed by a flying brick as your home is crushed, and how to escape the Earth's destruction with your friend Ford Prefect. A basic knowledge of the book is helpful at this early stage, but before long the adventure takes some highly original turns and offers a series of difficult and brilliantly conceived puzzles.

One of the best involves trying to secure a Babel fish from a dispenser in the hold of one of

the Vogon craft. You won't believe the deviousness of it. I don't believe the deviousness of it! Later still, by discovering and activating an improbability drive, you even find yourself taking on the roles of other characters in the game in completely different time periods, and encountering such beings as the Bugblatter beast of Traal which is so stupid it thinks that if you can't see it, it can't see you. Needless to say the number of locations is vast, and the game also features a useful scoring system, which often gives clues as to whether you've made a giant step forward or a massive blunder.

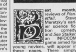
With this game's humour, size and attention to detail, it can only be said that it is destined to become one of the all-time classics. One of the failings of many adventurers who play this game is their own gullibility. Whilst other INFOCOM games have the most cryptic of puzzles to solve, they are at least solvable by careful deduction. Such is not necessarily the case with this game. The sense of humour that pervades the book takes on nastier overtones here, where the player has fun poked at him or her endlessly.

As an example (which shouldn't spoil your fun), you wake up at one point to find yourself in a strange room with a door to the east. 'Go East,' or any variation thereof brings the reply, 'You can't go that way.' Most unusual. Try again, you think. 'EAST!' No way — it won't let you out. 'Look,' only re-affirms what seems fairly straightforward. A plain room with an exit to the east. I tried to get out of this for some time and was about to contact INFOCOM to tell them about this bug, when in final desperation, I tried again. It said, 'You are standing in a room with an exit aft (we lied about the one to the east).'

In fact, the reason why the humour translates so incredibly well to the medium of adventure games is because, Steve Meretzky, one of INFOCOM's top game designers, is a great fan of Douglas Adams and Mr Adams is a great fan of INFOCOM. Consequently, they worked together on the project with Adams devising new puzzles and ideas while Meretzky handled the actual programming. The result is a game many have claimed to be the greatest home computer entertainment program ever written. The catch is — there's more to come. Although I have not yet finished the game. It is apparently only the first part of a bigger adventure. It cannot be passed by.



CONCLUSION



ext month, reviews of *Planetfall*, Steve Meretzky's earlier science fiction comedy and *Sea Stalker*, an INFOCOM game aimed for young novices, will appear in these pages. There simply wasn't the space to do them justice here. Of course, should any new games appear via Softsel, then we will review those as well.

All the games above are available for **£19,95** with the exception of *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* which carries a **£24.95** price tag. Admittedly, this means they are twice as expensive as most other adventure games but it is no exaggeration to say that they last ten times as long. Plus, INFOCOM's packaging is renowned for being the best of any games company in the world. *Deadline* for instance, comes with documentary information, relevant letters and even evidence in the form of some pills (which are not real, of course). All are printed to a quality which would put most other publishers to shame.

Finally, there is one important thing to note. Whilst all INFOCOM games have an unbeatable parser and massive vocabularies, the more recent creations often have more abbreviations or indeed new key words. New versions of old games sometimes have these added (the company's INFOLOGIC operating system is very flexible). Occasionally, a game may not be able to cope with Z as an abbreviation for WAIT, for example. Otherwise, the general sophistication of their system is so high, you're unlikely to notice the rare missing term anyway.

As for ratings. Well, believe me, if I could rate them, I would. You may think that this is going over the top, but until they are seen and played in detail, it really is impossible to express how brilliant (in the true sense of the word) they are. All I can say is that all the games above are AMTIX! ACCOLADES but in another league. Amstrad owners are about to become affected by an adventuring epidemic of already vast proportions. As long as Softsel quickly iron out the CPM bugs they seem to have hit, they too must be congratulated for their effort and insight.

See for yourselves.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

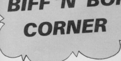
DON'T PANIC!

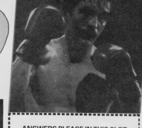

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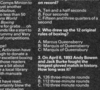

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BARRY MCGUIGAN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING







Ladeeees and Gentlemen. Allow the Apprentice Comps Minion to present to you yet another *amazing*, and *fabulous*, competition. No less than 50 *Barry McGuigans World Championship Boxing* programs up are for grabs . . . oh gawsh, this sounds like a start to one of those Crummy and Very Garbagey sort of competitions. Sorry folks.

Back to unhype! Yupsirreebobs, Activision have been kind enough to donate a number of their excellent boxing simulations to those readers who either know a bit about boxing, or have a local library well stocked with manuals about pugilism.

As you might have read, *BMcG's WCB* certainly blew the tiny minds of our reviewing minions. Long into the afternoon did they play. In fact one fellow, a certain Mr "Dandy" Handy (as he likes to call himself) even skipped college to play the game, an him being such a little swot too . . . it must be good.

Anyway, enough of this frivolous chatter. What we want you to do is answer the five questions below correctly. Now, these questions are a little tricky, but this'll help you clear the post Christmas fuzz from your brains and put you in good stead for returning to school or work (Heh Heh Heh). To help you, we've put three answers next to each question — you've got to pick the right one. Don't despair, a three to one chance on each question, five questions . . . so that makes ummmm, errrrr. Oh poo! Here are the questions anyway:

1. What is the quickest knockout on record?

A. Ten and a half seconds
B. Four seconds
C. Fifteen and three quarters of a second

2. Who drew up the 12 original rules of boxing?

A. Marcus Queensberry
B: Marquis of Queensberry
C: Marquis of Queensbury

3. On April 6, 1893 Andy Bowen and Jack Burke fought the longest gloved match in history. How long was it?

A. 126 three-minute rounds
B. 112 three-minute rounds
C. 110 three minute rounds

4. Who was the only boxer ever to be receive a knighthood?

A. Sir Don Dannelly
B. Sir Dan Donnelly
C. Sir Tom Donnelly

5.What was Muhammed Ali's original name?

A. Kassius Clay
B. Cassius Clay
C. Cassius Klay

Gottem all correct? Good, then wrap up this form in a cosy envelope and say to Mr Postman "please take this as fast as you can to **BIFF 'N' BOP COMP, AMTIX, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB** and make sure it arrives before February 28th". After you've stuck a stamp on the envelope, that is.

ANSWERS PLEASE IN THIS SLOT

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3: . . . .

4: . . . .

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WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS

Despite the cynicism of some readers, we have all been working very hard here at the Towers to pick the winners for the competitions in issue one. The chimps have been sifting through the piles of entries for days on end. Our Amstrad has been gently getting warm sorting names and addresses into some sort of logical order — they deserve a rest. They aren't going to get one becuase there's the next lot to do.

STARION COMP

For the Starion competition we asked you to join a few dots together. You did a great job and we had absolutely no trouble at all picking the winners — the next one will be a lot harder. Below is a list (pretty well alphabetical) of the 50 persons who each receive a copy of Melbourne House's Starion — in due course.

Rick J Artes, Horsham, RH13 6DN; Anthony Beck, Wigston, LE8 1XL; John Bell, Hayle, CORNWALL TR27 5DX; PJ Boyce, Chelmsford, CM2 7QH; M Burton, OXTON, OX14 1ET; Chris Calderbank, Rochester, Kent; Caroline Capenter, Weston-Super-Mare, BS22 0NX; NY Card, Farnsborough, GU14 0DX; IS Chapman, Tottington Bury, BL8 3LA; DK Clark, Cumbran, NP44 4SG; V Corby, Leatherhead, KT22 7HU; Barrie M Day, Rayleigh, ESSEX, SS6 7LH; D(imbonce) Dickson, Longlevens, GLOUSCESTER; Alan Dunlop, Ballymena, N IRELAND; S Edney, Gosport, PO12 4NS; C Fitzpatrick, Llanfaurfechan, GWYNEDD; T Goodfellow, Cleethorpes, SOUTH HUMBERSIDE; Lee Healey, Walsall, STAFFS; John Hickey, Worcester Park, SURREY; J Hughes, Swinton, M27 1TY; GS Hullet, Blackenhall, CHESHIRE; John Burd, Leemontgomery, SHROPSHIRE; Martin Johnson, Hull, HU10 7QY; RM Kirkby, North Ascot, BERKS; Harpal Kooner, BIRNMINGHAM, B12 8QP; S Kriger, Balmullo, SCOTLAND, KY16 0DE; Marivoet Luc, 9000, Gent, BELGIUM; SG Mitchell, Basingstoke, RG21 3EH; Carl Moon, Chesham, BUCKS; Hilary Newall, Mason Hall, BIRMINGHAM; Marion Nicholson, Culverstone, KENT; Chris Norman, Norton, LETCHWORTH; Andrew Parle, Leuchars, SCOTLAND; Gary Pearce, Hemel Hempstead, HERTS; David Prew, Hook Norton, OXTON; C Ramdeen, Cowley, OXFORD; Rhys Salter, Rumney, CF3 8RN; KJ Sandell, CORNWALL, PL11 2JN; A Schofield, Reading, RG4 0DJ; CJ Smith, WILTS, BA13 3LW; P Waller, Skene, AB3 6WX; Tim Walton, Kingston, EAST SUSSEX; A Watson, Inverness, IV3 5PT; Paul Whyte, Hayes, Bromley, BR2 7JW; Stephen Williams, Luton LU3 2NP; GS Williams, Barnsley, S70 5PT; Simon Wray, BRISTOL, BS12 7ER; Grant Woodward, Birmingham, B31 2NR; Alan Wright, Alloa, Clacks; Raymond de Vries, Hartley, DA3 7EQ;

US GOLD — RAID COMP

Now the Dakka Dakka boom competition was a teeny weeny bit embarassing. Yes we did blunder, on the right hand page we declared that US Gold were giving away 30 RS232 interfaces and 55 copies of Raid. In small print we printed it as it was; one interface with a game and 29 games for the runners up. I must admit that on the face of it this looked a little naughty but it wasn't intentional. (we did try kidding US Gold that the ideal was as laid out on the right hand page but they aren't quite as daft as I had hoped) Never mind the competition minion has been well and truly reprimanded (the building hasn't been this clean for months) and we promise not to do it again. In the mean time the results; The Interface goes to **Mark Golding** from Birmingham , B15 2JG. This lot each get a copy of the game Raid;

David Arnold, King's Lynn, PE30 4SP; S Butters, Weymouth, DT3 5HD; Douglas Cameron, Holm Mains, IV2 4XJ; Chris Clark, SURREY, CR2 3DD; Richard Connolly, Emsworth, HANTS; A Dansbury, COVENTRY; CV4 7DN, Richard Evans; Christchurch, BH23 8NH; Peter Finnigan, Kearsey Bolton, GR MANCHESTER; David Gibbon, Bearpark, DH7 7DR; EM Hall, Buckhurst Hill, ESSEX; GR Hammond, Gosport, PO12 3QY; Johnathan Hankey, Clanfield, PO8 0LN; MA Haselden, Tolworth, KT5 9RA; L Heathfield, Ashford, KENT; Mark Holbrook, Arnold, NG5 8EA; Thomas Holtby, North Ferriby, HV14 3JJ; J Hopkins, Lichfield, WS13 6ET; N MacFarlane, Weybridge, KT15 2QS; Paul Martin, South Woodhamfer, CM3 5SA; Iain Mathieson, DUNDEE, DD2 1SH; R Nightingale, Chesterfield, S42 6PB; Chris Norman, Norton Letchworth, SG6 1AJ; Alan Preece, Tollindine, WR4 9QY; Simon Protheroe, Dudley, DY1 2RX; Beryl Rippon, Fearnhead, WA2 0EW; MG Roberts, Urmston, MANCHESTER; H Siva, New Malden, SURREY; Stephen Williams, Luton, LU3 2NP; R Wood, Warlingham, CR3 9BJ;

MACADAM BUMPER COMP

The PSS Pinball competition, inspired by their game Macadam Bumper, also went down very well. Talking of which did you know that the lady in the game was NUDE in the French version? I suspect that the French name actually translated into Madam Bumper. On with the story. As you might remember there were three sets of prizes; five videos of the film Tommy, five albums of same thing and twenty five £5 vouchers redeemable against PSS software (Madam Bumper?) The prizes ended up as follows.

The videos go to:
Damian Barrow, Adlington, LANCS, PR6 9LP; Chris Boggett, Marlow, SL7 1PG; Julie Fox, Gwent, S WALES, NP9 5AG; Andrea Norman, Gosport, HANTS, PO13 9SA; Pete Wight, Bangor, GWYNEDD;

While the albums go to:
Ms DL Bainbridge, Harrogate, N YORKSHIRE; John Hickey, Worcester Park, K74 8SF; P Kear, Morley, LS27 8NY; James S McCreadie, Stevenston, Ayrshire, KA20 4ET; H Solanki, Handsworth, BIRMINGHAM.

The rest get the £5 vouchers:
John Atkinson, Glenridding, CUMBRIA, CA11 0QA; , Stephen Barnes, Carrickfergus, CO ANTRIM; IR Bennet, Daisy Hill, Westhoughton, BOLTON; Colin Broad, Oldham, GRTR MANCHESTER, OL1 2NY; Tony Brown, Newport, GWENT, NP9 6SN; Gary Chaptup, Bridlington, E YORKS, YO15 2ER; Richard Couchman, Huntingdon, CAMBS, PE17 4XT; Steve Culshaw, Stretford, MANCHESTER; Steven Dixon, Darlington, CO DURHAM, DL3 6QR; DG Erasmus, Woodfieldside, GWENT, NP2 0DA; JS Gandy, Firth Park, SHEFFIELD, S5 6NR; Alan Gibson, Tranent, EAST LOTHIAN, EM33 2EE; T Howell, Runcorn, CHESHIRE, WA7 2XG; Martyn Lea, Hillingdon, MIDDX, UB8 3LP; Stewart Mabe, Newport, Gwent, SOUTH WALES; P Needham, Nuneaton, WARWICKSHIRE, CV10 9LX; Ms M Nicholson, Culverstone, KENT; Graham Payne, Gosport, HANTS, PO12 4BU; D Ratcliffe, Surbiton, SURREY, KT5 9BX; Malcolm Serbert, Harrogate, NORTH YORKSHIRE, HG2 5LJ; H Siva, New Malden, SURREY; Jan Szafranski, Bury, LANCS, BL9 0TE; M Turpie, Markinch, FIFE, KV7 6DB; Tim Varley, Watlington, OXFORD; Eric Wilson, Little Downham, CAMBRIDGESHIRE, CB6 2TG;

WORLD CUP SOCCER COMP

And Finally we come to the football competition sponsored by Macmillan. The competition was inspired by their fine package called World Cup Soccer and the prize was suitably related. In fact I do believe that the two winners will actually have enjoyed their prize by the time this appears on the streets so I had better get their names right. The two going (been) to the Spurs ground are **Andrew Kerr** from Lincoln and **K Kimber** from Faringdon. Soon the following persons will all be better off by one copy of Macmillan's World Cup Soccer:

Jason Bourne, Newquay, CORNWALL, TR7 3EH; D.A. Bullock, Luton, BEDS, LU4 0BU; Chris Boggett, Marlow, BUCKS, SL7 1PG; Andrew Coote, Lee Mount, HALIFAX, HX3 5ED; Stephen Cossington, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE, NE5 3UF; John Crees, Colchester, ESSEX, CO3 5PR; Martin Dallimer, WORCESTER, WR5 2DB; Marinos Damainou, Whetstone, LONDON, N20; Michael Fenson, Waltham Cross, HERTS; David Forsyth, Havant, HANTS, PO9 4BB; Richard Gibson, Strensall, YORK, YO3 5WX; Martin Gill, Billinghay, LINCOLN, LN4 4AZ; P Gourans, Chigwell Row, ESSEX, IG7 4QH; Andrew Green, Sheermess, KENT, ME12 3LN; Jane Gubb, Bechminster, BRISTOL, B33 3AD; T Hackman, Branwell, SUFFOLK, IP31 1AR; Stuart Harvey, Goole, W.HUMBERSIDE, DN14 5XU; P Hillard, Netherton, Dudley, DY2 0NW; Shaun Holt, Crow Woods, Ramsbottom, LANCS; Paul Houldworth, Great Harwood, LANCS, BB6 7AS; Martin Johnson, Kirk Ella, HUMBERSIDE, HU10 7QY; ; William Leung, Oldbury, WEST MIDS; Malcolm Lowing, Carshalton, SURREY, SM5 2EX; GD MacKenzie, Chadwell Heath, Romford ESSEX, RM6 5BJ; R J Marshall, Redcar, CLEVELAND, TS10 2AF; Trevor Martin, Lodden Fields, Woodley, READING; Semin Maude, Guilford, SURREY, GU4 7JB; James McCreadie, Stevenston, SCOTLAND, KA20 4ET; Mark Nardin, Cove, Farnborough, HANTS; K Neilson, Freshfield, MERSEYSIDE, L37 7EL; Clive Newton, Coed Eva, GWENT, NP44 7LR; Zak Oades, Kelston Green, BRISTOL, BS15 7EB; RS Patterson, BELFAST, BT6 0ED; Alister Philip, Clayton-le-Woods, Leyland, LANCS, PR5 2TX; D Ratcliffe, Surbiton, SURREY, KT5 9BX; Philip Robinson, Castlereagh, BELFAST, BT6 9PJ; S Rowe, Worthing, W.SUSSEX, BN12 4AU; R Sarno, Hyde, Tameside, CHESHIRE, SK14 4TR; Stuart Scott, Brentwood, ESSEX, CM14 4TH; Mark Skinner, Great Yarmouth, NORFOLK, NR31 9JZ; Ian Smith, Wellington, SOMERSET, TA21 9AW; P Tebbit, Bury St Emurlds, SUFFOLK, IP32 6UT; SD Truscott, Pontypool, GWENT; Paul Wallace, Felling, Gateshead, TYNE & WEAR; Christian Watts, Rowlands Gill, TYNE & WEAR, NE39 1EQ; Pete Wight, Bangor, GWYNEDD; Eric Wilkson, Little Downham, CAMBRIDGESHIRE, CB6 2TG; Les Wraight, Hainault, Ilford, ESSEX.

ONT THE RUN COMP

The Design Design competition gave us all a good giggle. You see **A Gillespie**, of Co Antrim, sent in a card and was judged to have sent the funiest captions. However we did receive one entry on a cassette (we had tried for some time to load it into an Amstrad before it finally dawned on us that it was an audio recording), what we had been sent was a mini-play which used the photgraphs as illustrations. It was very funny and we laughed heartily. So much so that we decided to ignore the bit about sending the captions 'on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope' — BUT FOR THIS ONCE ONLY!. The wise guy was **C Harkin** from Redditch. If you want your tape back you will have to negotiate with Design Design 'cos they've got it. I hope you both enjoy your day out. In the meantime the following each get a copy of On the Run.

Stephen Baines, CO ANTRIM, BT57 8RA; Colin Broad, Oldham, OL1 2NY; Peter Brown, Bromley, BR2 9NJ; John Burd, Telford, SHROPSHIRE; Ian Callow, CHESHIRE, CW12 4EA; Steven Dixon, Darlington, DL3 6QR; Laurence Fumarkalli, LEEDS, LS14 3DN; Patrick Grant, COVENTRY, CV6 4EY; Nicky Harris, Dunstoke, BEDS, LU5 4BH; RF Hemmings, WILTS, SN2 3RH; T Howel, Runcorn, CHESHIRE, WA7 2XG; Chris Locke, HERTS, EN11 9AE; P Long, BRISTOL, BS3 3BP; Mark Marshall, Barnsley, S YORKS; Scott Marshall, LEICS, LE10 2PX; Stephen Martin, STAFFS, WS13 7DA; Allan Mayers, Cwmbran, GWENT, NP4 5SG; Brian Moore, Middleburg St, HU9 2QZ; Christopher Morgan, Mellor, Blackburn, BB1 9DJ; Stewart Russel, GLASGOW, G77 5BL; SA Sharp, Atherstone, WARKS; AJ Steel, Yeovil, SOMERSET, BA22 8NS; John Stringer, Worsley, MANCHESTER; P Taylor, Middlesborough, CLEVELAND; Mark Tozer, Canvey Island, ESSEX, SS8 9LR; SD Truscott, Pontypool, GWENT, NP4 0QU; Darrin Wakeman, S WIRRAL, L65 7DX; M Wilkinson, Osgodby, Market Rasen, LINCS, LN8 3TA; Christopher Winstanley, Preston, LANCS, PR4 1RS;

Pic 1. Parking in Ludlow is a Dis-Astra

Pic 2. Finalists in the annual 'stretch a bogey' comp.

Pic 3. There's nothing in the manual about hood ornaments

Pic 4. Where's he parked the get away car?


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LETTERTECH

Amtech is a little pushed for space this issue mostly because Christmas has imposed such constraints on our time schedule that we haven't had time to play with any of the goodies for long enough. But by the time you read this Christmas will be well and truly past (for another year anyhow), The Amstrad User show will have been and gone. The signs are that we are in for a real treat from both the hardware and the software purveyors.

Never let it be said that Amtech doesn't get results. In the last issue Derek Tatum asked us to sort out a music package for him. Well Derek have a 'butchers' at the Music Processor preview. It promises to be an excellent package but it is limited by the Amstrad's sound chip. So I was a wondering if any of the bright boys out there could come up with an add-on sound chip. It need only be an advanced sound thingy, a stereo amp and connected using MIDI protocols (so it would be compatible with most music software, present and future). That way we could get some really excellent sound for not a great deal of money. Come on somebody get designing the Commodore sound simulator.

In the meantime a few more queries and tips, Amtech's own. Keep em coming

LINE FEED PROBLEM

Dear Amtech,
I am writing to you about the double line feed problem encountered when using an Amstrad CPC 464 with an Epson printer. Previous solutions have included:

1. Cutting wire 14 on the printer connector
2. Setting the printer's internal DIP switches
3. Sticking tape over pin 14 on the edge connector

I have discovered another solution which avoids the problems incurred by using the above methods. My solution is to alter the size of the printer's line feeds using the control characters ESC A and ESC 3.

The ESC A code is sent using:
PRINT (hash)8,CHR$(27);'A'; CHR$(n)
Where 'n' is the size of the line feed in units of 1/72 inch and can be in the range 0 to 85. I find values of about 6 best, but you can use any value you prefer.

The ESC 3 code is sent using:
PRINT (hash)8, CHR$(27); '3'; CHR$(n)
Where 'n' is as above, the size of the line feed, but in units of 1/216 inch and so can be used for more accurate positioning.

I enclose some sample printouts using this method on a Epson RX-80.

I find this a flexible solution which I hope will be of use to your readers.

Yours Sincerely, Alun Thomas
Merthyr Tydfil

Well thanks very much. I am surprised that we haven't been asked about this wretched phantom line feed problem but your letter should stop anyone who was even thinking about writing in. My preferred solution is the surgical one, but that can render the lead useless for other applications. I had tried your solution some time ago and never managed to get get satisfactory results; you seem to have cracked it. Have a a £10 voucher for your pains!

AMTECH

MODEM ON THE CHEAP

Dear Amtech,
I have been looking around the shops to find a cheap modem for my Amstrad. The people in the shops were not very helpful. Is it possible for you to advise me about buying one? Then I could send off for one on your mail order form.

William Hopkins, Petersfield

As far as cheap Modems are concerned you can't do much better than the unit supplied by Circuit Holdings. The unit comes complete and only costs £30. If you have a browse through the Christmas issue (number 3) you will see that we reviewed it on page 78. The only drawback is that the unit can only talk to other computers at 1200/75 or 1200/1200 but that's perfect for Micronet and a vast number of bulletin boards.

AMTECH

HASHING A PRINT COMMAND

Dear Amtech,
Recently I have been writing a program to use in conjunction with my printer which I bought last month, but I have come across a problem. I cannot easily get the computer to print on the screen and on the printer. Every time I want to use the printer I have to change the print command to; PRINT (hash)8.

This is rather annoying and time consuming.

I know there must be an easy way to get round the problem but I can't understand how. The only other solution that I can think of is to print everything to the screen, and then use a screen dump program

Perhaps you could help

C Strand, Leamington Spa, Warks

Certainly. Actually when you read the solution you might do yourself an injury. The Amstrad PRINT command can be used on its own, in which case the output is sent to the screen or stream 0 — because that's the stream that goes to the screen. The stream number is addressed by appending a hash number to the print statement so instead of saying PRINT, you could say PRINT (hash) 0 or, if say A was equal to 0, PRINT (hash) A. As you noticed PRINT (hash) 8 sends output to the printer. All that you need to do is to use a variable, like A, with each PRINT command and then the output will go to the screen or printer depending on whether A is set to 0 or 8. You can, of course change the variable while the program is running.

MIND MADE UP

Dear Amtech,
I would like to congratulate you on a brilliant magazine, the other day I conned my humble Spectrum owning friend into lending me a quid so I could buy it. On the subject of Spectrums I previously owned a Spectrum and I wasn't sure whether to buy a Commodore 64 or an Amstrad, but after some thought the choice became obvious.

Many Amstrad owners may be using the famed Quickshot 2 joystick so here are a few tips to improve its operation; Firstly unscrew the base, here you will find a four pronged switch operator (as shown in the diagram). Secondly, stick some sellotape strips on top of each other until about 2mm in thickness, over the switches (marked 'A').

The end result will make the joystick more responsive. Take care that the sellotape is not too thick or the joystick will not respond correctly.

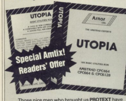
Matthew Salmon, Norfolk

A pretty cool idea that, but I must admit that I had always thought that said joystick was responsive in its natural state. An idea that was soon dismissed by a member of ZZAPP!·64 mag who happened to be lying under the table. So, for those of you equipped with a Quickshot 2 and reactions so fast that the joystick is left behind, you might well consider Matthew's idea.

PLACE SELLOTAPE OVER SWITCHES AS INDICATED

Next month Amtech will be overflowing with news and reviews of some the goodies we picked up at the show. If you have any technical hints, tips or indeed problems, write in to: LETTERTECH, AMTIX!, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.

Beef up Straddles with UTOPIA



Those nice men who brought us **PROTEXT** have made their latest product available exclusively to the readers of AMTIX!

What is **UTOPIA**? Well it's a state with perfect political and social conditions and — a basic toolkit ROM. The ROM contains a library of useful sub-routines which can be invoked directly with a single external command. Most of the routines are designed to be used from BASIC and make a programmer's life a lot easier. Imagine the convenience of getting a graphics or text screen dump without having to load a program in, just a simple bar command. Besides the commands to help you write your own programs the ROM also has a large number of file commands so you don't have to keep loading in your system disk to perform such mundane operations as FORMAT. Powerful commands enable the user to juggle around bits of memory with ease.

Apart from having your own **UTOPIA** the only other thing you need is a way of plugging it into your Amstrad. No problem. The price includes the Arnor single ROM board which can be located discreetly inside your computer without you even having to take a screwdriver to the thing. Although the ROM is compatible with the 464, 664 and 6128 the board is not, so please let Auntie Aggie in mail order know what type of Straddles you live with. Apart from that the only other requirement is that you should part with a bit of cash (well a cheque or postal order would be better). All we ask is a mere £42.50 and that includes the normal nasties such as VAT, postage and packing.

I enclose a Cheque/Postal order for £42.50 made payable to 'Newsfield Ltd'.

Please send my UTOPIA and ROM board to;

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BOOKWORM

BOOKS
Getting into Code

Melbourne House's *Ready Made Machine Language Routines on the Amstrad* (£7.95) by Joe Pritchard sets out to provide a variety of prepackaged machine code routines ready to run for the code novice.

The different programs have been split under eight different headings, each taking on and tackling various aspects of the subject. At the beginning of each chapter there is a short piece detailing any relevant background information. The first few usually give examples of BASIC programs converted to machine code. As you delve further into the chapter, things get more involved as the book gives examples of results only attainable through code. I found this style easy to read and constantly informative easing you through what become complex subjects.

The routines are presented in various different ways, the shorter programs are hexdumps with a BASIC program that pokes the bytes into memory. Longer routines are presented as a listing generated with Arnor's *Maxam* ROM. *Maxam* is a fairly standard Zilog type assembler so anyone with *Devpac, Zapp, The Code Machine* or any other similar product should be able to use the listings provided. A little knowledge regarding the interfacing of code and BASIC may be of help, but apart from that they are easily converted. At the end of each listing is a hexdump of the bytes used, of great use to people without an assembler of any sort. Information is also provided regarding the routines relocatability.

Around half of the book's contents are involved in some way with screen handling, a section where the speed of code would be appreciated compared to the BASIC ROM's convoluted and involved way of doing things. The difference in what is achievable through BASIC and what can be achieved in machine code is vast when it comes to any type of graphics handling.

Extremely informing is chapter 4 — scrolling the screen. Though screen scrolling may not seem to be mind bogglingly useful, in its attempt to present several alternative ways of scrolling the screen, the book does a very competent job of explaining the Amstrad's awkward screen mapping. It makes easy work of a hard task.

For 464 owners, the fill routines could be put to good use for those trying to gain compatability with BASIC 1.1 which provides such a function. Other appreciated utilities include a tape header reader, polygon fill routines, an RSX explanation and key testing routines.

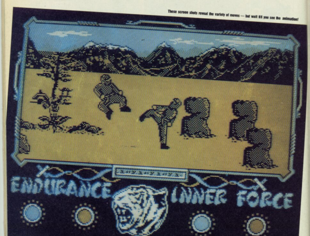
The real usefulness of this book doesn't lie in the code routines as, given enough time, any programmer could write them, but more in the way they are explained. *Ready Made Machine Language Routines for the Amstrad* is perfect for the user who has an assembler, knows the basics of code programming but has no idea what to do next. Through the small programs contained in this book, Joe Pritchard manages to give the practical experience needed to write your own programs that books teaching machine code usually leave out. All in all an excellent book that thoroughly covers the subject and achieves its aims.

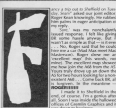
Gary Liddon

Ready Made Machine Language Routines for the Amstrad CPC464/CPC664

THE WAY OF THE ROGER — OF FANTASY, FIGHTING AND IMAGINARY 'A' ROADS

These screen shots reveal the variety of moves — but wait till you see the animation!





ancy a trip out to Sheffield on Tuesday, Sean?' asked our joint editor, Roger Kean knowingly. He rubbed him palms in eager anticipation of my reply.

'Sure,' was my nonchalantly issued response. I felt like giving BR some hassle anyway. But it wasn't as simple as that — is it ever . . . No, Roger said that he could hire me a car (Mad Max meet Mad Masterson). Roger drew me an 'excellent map' (his words, not mine). The excellent map showed me how join the A68 from the A5. Yours truly drove up an down the A5 for two hours looking for a non-existent A68 . . . Come back BR, all is forgiven. In the meantime — **ROGER!!!!!!!**

I made it to Sheffield in the end, of course. I'm a genius after all. Soon I was inside the hallowed offices of Gremlin Graphics and it was down to business.

Interactive fantasy stories have been popular for a few years now, and the craze has still not reached its peak, according to the marketing research people. One of the latest series to appear is the **Way of the Tiger** series published by Knight books, co-written by **Jamie Thomson** (ex features editor of *WHITE DWARF* magazine) and author **Mark Smith**. The series puts the reader in the role of a Ninja warrior in a series of martial arts adventures flavoured with a touch of fantasy. Gremlin have acquired the rights to produce the computer game tie-ins to the range and I was there to get a glimpse of the first of their games.

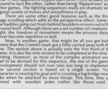
As **Ian Stewart**, the Gremlin Guru, explained, the first of the games is an arcade adventure but subsequent games will be more conventional adventures with no animation. *Way of the Tiger* is also the title of the first game and the plot is something of a prequel to the series by Messrs Thomson and Smith. It involves a really nasty piece of work who has cold bloodedly killed off a close relative. You are out to avenge the death but before the final confrontation, there are a variety of other beasties and evil-doers to eliminate.

You have two characteristics — Endurance and Inner Force, the levels of which are constantly displayed in the lower part of the screen. When these are both thoroughly depleted, it's good old Game Over time. They are wittled away by receiving and applying damage to or from the various creatures and enemies likely to be encountered during the game. Of course receiving damage results in more of a characteristic being depleted than making a successful attack upon something else, but even then, the amount of Endurance or Inner Force lost, is related to what is actually involved in the combat sequence.

So what do you actually see on the screen? Well, as might be expected, the atmosphere is distinctly oriental. The foreground and middle distance are littered with ancient ruins, willow trees (courtesy of some fabled plate designers) and boulders. It is possible to move behind or in front of some of these. In the far background were some distinctly **Himalaya**nesque mountains.

This area is approximately twenty screens across and you are free to wander wherever you may, fighting the baddies. Ah yes, as for the baddies, there are several. Some of these are other Ninjas of varying fighting ability and intelligence. There are also some sword wielding Goblins, some horned, bipedal and vicious looking weirdos and some **really** nasty Giants. Each of the different creatures require different fighting techniques. For instance, it's impossible to do a flying kick against a Goblin because the little terrors are too small. It's also useful to remember that getting too close to the Giant is fatal because of his incredible strength (the entire screen shakes when he walks on). Constant backing away while risking the occasional flying kick is advisable when dealing with one of these. One of the interesting features about the way the game handles combat procedures is that if your (or your opponent's) strength is low, then the amount of damage inflicted by a given blow is also low.

As is the norm with recent games of this type, several different moves are available by careful manipulation of the joystick. Where Gremlin have tried to go one better than their competitors is in the animation of these moves. Both the character and the monsters are well drawn and animated. When a chop is delivered to another Ninja's neck, his head snaps backwards as it would in real life. Similarly, a well placed kick will have the opponent clutching the wounded



area. If two opponents bypass each other, they actually turn around to face the other, rather than being 'flipped over' as in other games. The fighting sequences really are dramatic with a great variety of moves and smoothness in play.

There are some other good features such as the three stage scrolling which adds to the perspective effect. Some of the baddies jump out from behind boulders or even out of the ground itself. Although there are a set number of creatures to fight, the freedom of movement means the process should never become repetitive or dull.

Now, in another game, that might be all you get but it seems that the Gremlin team got a little carried away with this one. The section above is actually only the first third of the game. It is also the only section to be completed at the time of writing. However, as most of the complex animation work had to be devised for this sequence, the rest of the game's development should not now take too long to implement. The second section is based on a single screen. Your character is nearing his goal and is crossing a log bridge near a lake when he attacked by more Ninjas. This time, they are armed with wooden poles (rather like those used in



The Gremlin programming team left to right: Shaun Hollingworth, Peter Harrop, Marco Duroe and Chris Kerry — a 'quiet' bunch.

Kendo) but fortunately, so are you. The fight is made more difficult by the fact that you have to keep your balance on the log — otherwise things will get very wet . . .

All that had been programmed when I was there was the screen itself. It looked fantastic, however with a distant but graphically detailed pagoda in the background, it's delicate form gently reflected in the lake. One hell of a setting for a martial arts fight. When this is successfully completed, the climactic part of the game is reached. This consists of a bit of Katana wielding against some particularly evil Samurai warriors.

The Amstrad version is on schedule for intended release in February 86 and all versions of the game will be sold at around the ten pound mark which, from what I saw would appear to be a case of good value for money.

It seems strange that given the nature of the first game, Gremlin intend the second two of the series to be adventures. Even stranger considering they are negotiating with Adventure International for the subsequent games and AI are effectively in competition with them anyway with their Fighting Fantasy adaptations based on the Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone series. Nevertheless it's early days yet as far as *Way of the Tiger*'s sequels are concerned. In the meantime, I shall wait for the final version of this game to arrive and hope that the next time Roger draws me a map it bears a closer resemblance to reality than his previous effort. It's his frustrated imagination, you know. His desire to see that Newsfield journalists go where none have gone before. I just hope he gets better by the time he decides I'm worth sending to America . . .

SOMEWHERE NICE AND COSY

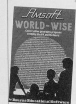
David Paul, a school headmaster, takes an introductory look at the educational software scene for AMTIX!

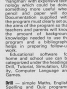
When a young child comes home from school and says 'I have been computing today,' have you ever wondered how young children are introduced to computers? A survey carried out in 1980 showed that less than 40 primary schools providing for children aged from 4 years to 11 years had a micro — yet by 1982 a two year Government scheme had been devised to equip every primary school with at least one computer and some sample software to run on it. By the end of 1984 it was hoped that some 27,000 schools would be able to give 'hands-on' computer experience.

Local Education Authorities taking part in The Department of Industry's Micros in Primary Schools Scheme were given the choice of one of three computers for their schools. The scheme offered only 'British' machines, the BBC Model B, RML 480Z — a bulky machine with little third party software support, and, almost as an afterthought, the Sinclair Spectrum. Few individual schools opted for the RML machine.

Not surprisingly, Amstrads not yet having made their appearance, the BBC became the most widely used school computer. The Spectrum made little impression although Sinclair, wanting to be taken seriously in the Education sector bundled it with the infamous ZX printer, Interface 1 and the promise of a free 'Logo' package when it became available.

Educational publishers were caught napping by the sudden influx of technology into the schools and found themselves unable to meet the requests for software to accompany their other materials. They neither had a marketing policy nor a clear-cut idea of what was wanted in the schools and as a result the quality of many first 'brand name' software packages left a lot to be desired. Several publishers set up 'in-house' teams of programmers to design their programs but this proved to be a very expensive approach to the problem as they found that a worthwhile software package could cost around £20,000 — £30,000 in research and development — and there was no guarantee that the program would be a success and make money. The market was a small one, 27,000 schools sounds like a large potential but if you compare this with the size of the home computer market it shrinks to insignificance.





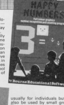
Other publishers bought in material from the smaller software houses, as well as giving them quality control they could also finance the transfer of a program from one computer system to another and appeal to both the home and educational sector. Mirrorsoft, Collins, Longman and Macmillan are some of the well known publishers who use this method to market high quality programs for a range of computers designed for education at home and school. The Amstrad range of machines is now so popular that good programs are automatically produced for them and the best of the programs already in catalogues are being transferred — notice the 'Amstrad' overlay stickers on the software packs.

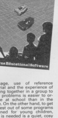
Not all programs work equally well at home and school, some computer simulations are superb in the classroom situation because of the work that an interested teacher can involve the pupils in off the computer, in this way the computer becomes a normal part of the school curriculum. The development of language, use of reference material and the experience of working together in a group to solve problems is easier to organise at school than in the home. On the other hand, to get the best out of some programs designed for young children, what is needed is a quiet, cosy atmosphere with a parent alongside the child to operate the computer, talk the child through the program or read screen prompts if the child is unable to read — hard to accomplish in a lively classroom.

Educational programs should be designed so that they take into account the age and ability of the user. Above all, they must be educationally worthwhile and not just use the computer for the sake of it, why play 'hangman' with expensive technology which could be doing something more useful when pencil and paper will do? Documentation supplied with the program must clearly set out the aims of the program so that teachers and parents will know the amount of background knowledge needed to use the program and a bibliography helps in preparing follow-up work.

Educational software for home and school use can be categorized under the headings: Drill, Tutorial, Simulation, Utility, Computer Language and Games.

Drill — simple Maths, English, Spelling and Quiz programs, usually for individuals but can also be used by small groups. The better versions have an 'open ended' approach allowing changes to be made to the program without having to resort to machine code. These programs do not teach, they exercise skills already acquired and are often presented in a game format. Scoring and reward sequences









should be looked at carefully, one spelling program to be found in many schools merely ticks correct answers but sends a delightful space creature onto the screen to gobble up errors. The children soon learned it was a lot more fun to make mistakes. One of the best programs in this category which seems to be enjoyed as much by adults as well as children is *Number Painter* by **ASK**. This uses a platform game to exercise the four rules of number with twelve levels of difficulty and it certainly makes number work fun.

Tutorial — In the early days this type of program was often no more than an O-level text book transferred to the computer screen and as such had little value. You could at least read a book on the bus, so why bother setting up a computer to do the same thing? Fortunately things have changed and most reputable software publishers now have well thought out tutorial packages for many subjects in the school curriculum. *Pan Study Aids* published by **Hill MacGibbon/Pan** have been developed by teachers and O-level examiners to tutor, test and give practice in the chosen subject. They have been programmed by professional educational com puter programmers and provide software, textbook and test papers for key O-level and CSE subjects. At present Pan Course Tutors are available for Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Maths, Economics and French. Revision and Tutorial packages are available for younger children in Primary and Middle Schools. These are usually published by small software companies and are bought by anxious parents after reading their child's last school report. They rarely work as these schools use such a variety of text books and work schemes that it is likely that the software has a different approach and will lead to confusion.

Simulation — these programs are often quite involved and need back-up and preparation. Most children are familiar with the idea of a flight simulator and this can be used as a basis for teaching children how valuable a computer simulation can be in real life. Simulations in the classroom can add an excitement to learning that would be difficult to achieve otherwise, they can also add new topics to the curriculum. Astronomy and Meteorology can come to life with the aid of a computer in the classroom, it is fascinating to watch young children feed information into a computer to plot a star map for the night sky over their own home area for the same evening.

Rally Driver is a different sort of simulation. Here children have to guide a rally car over a course with changing road and weather conditions. A map accompanies the software and a considerable amount of problem solving is involved. The 'rally car' itself has a realistic instrument panel and a responsive steering wheel. Programs such as this can help develop Language , Creative Writing, Maths, Geography, Art and Craft.

Utility — These include word processors and graphics packages both of which are becoming increasingly important in educational computing and for which the Amstrad with its minimum 64K memory and monitor is well suited. *Amsword* (Easy and Advanced), *Tasword* and *Protext* are all suitable word processors for working with children. Adventure-making programs have considerable potential for work in education and several are now available for the Amstrad range.

Database/File — a specialised utility program which can be used in many areas of the curriculum. Children love to compile information and as yet are not too concerned about the Data Protection Act-although this sort of program can demonstrate the reason for such an Act!

Computer Language — With children not much emphasis is placed on BASIC and so the best known of these is Logo which should include list processing as well as *Turtle Graphics* for school use. The DR.Logo supplied with some Amstrad computers is a good, complete version. Logo Graphics programs provide parents with an idea of what is happening at school and can be fun to use with young children at home. Some experiments have been done with MicroProlog, the language used for much Artificial Intelligence research , but this is still at an early stage.

Games — Some have considerable value in education whilst others pretend to be educational. They can be used to motivate children — not as many programs from the USA do by allowing them to play 'Space Invaders' as a reward for a high score, but by allowing them to read, write and talk about their favourite programs. Why not a Halloween display in the classroom sparked off by *Ghostbusters*? Some arcade games do no more than exercise the fingertips but this type can often be of real value to children who are physically handicapped. The computer has opened up a whole new world for many children with special needs. 'Brain games' such as chess and Scrabble can be used in the education process and good chess programs,such as the Amstrad *Cyrus 2*, can be a boon to the school chess club as it can be used as a teaching and demonstration board which otherwise would cost £50. Adventure games such as *The Hobbit* can be used to good effect and I heard of one local library that had to scour neighbouring libraries for copies of Tolkien's book when the nearby school based a project on the computer program.

Given some imagination, many computer programs, not all originally intended for use in education, can be of tremendous value to enthusiastic teachers and parents. They can bring excitement into the curriculum and learning process without too much strain on financial resources.



AM-TECH

THE MUSIC SYSTEM . . . SOUNDS GOOD

JULIAN RIGNALL, AMTIX's resident sound generation unit, has been glancing over what is potentially the most promising music utility for the Amstrad.

The Music System was originally developed on the BBC micro, and recently took a step to the Commodore 64 being well received by ZZAP! 64 magazine. Now, **Rainbird Software** have decided to convert it for the Amstrad, a computer for which music utilities are very few and far between.

The system is controlled by pop-down menus (which drop down from the top of the screen when activated) and icon-like modules. The pop-downs are activated by the function keys and allow the user to change the different settings and parameters of the program, like tempo of a composition, insert barlines, change dynamics of the sound etc.

The modules make up the screen display and show functions like edit screen, memory available, metronome and voice being currently used. When one of these is selected it becomes highlighted and it is then possible to change the settings within the module.

The main aspect of *The Music System* is that it allows you to write and play back your own compositions. Selecting the **edit** module effectively puts you into write mode. In this mode a musical stave is shown on which musical notations can be placed ie quavers, rests, accidentals etc. A knowledge of the grammar of music is very useful when using the program, but if you're inexperienced you can always input tunes from music books to help you to get to grips with the program and the way music works in general.

If you want to write a tune then you must first key up and set the time signature. It is essential to do this so that the computer knows what to expect and can set the bars and play back accordingly. To input a note into the composition the user has to first select the type of note he wants to use and then use a cursor to place the note in the required position on the stave.

Any type of notes, bars or rests can be placed in this fashion and a very professional sounding tune can be created within a few hours. Editing compositions on *The Music System* is made very simple by using the word processor functions which can be selected from one of the pop-down menus. This allows you to do such things as copy a block of notes and insert them elsewhere in the composition, delete blocks of notes or just shuffle groups of notes around.

There is also a very useful feature that checks the tune for flaws. What it does is read the time signature then goes through the tune checking that the barlines are all in the correct place. If there are any irregularities (a beat missing) then the user is notified and changes can be made accordingly.

Since the Amstrad has three channels it can only handle a maximum of a three-note chord, a limitation most of today's computers share. Even with this problem some excellent tunes can be created by using one channel to act as a bass line, one lead and the other harmony, percussion or whatever, it all depends on what sort of tune you'd like to input or compose.

While you're composing or inputting a musical score, checks are being kept on the amount of memory left for all three voices (shown in the form of a bar which diminishes as more notes are input). A great feature is the way in which all the memory can be allocated to a single voice, or two voices if required.

In your tunes the voices needn't all sound the same — *The Music System* allows you to modify the sound of a single voice to your own specifications, so you can have one voice sounding like a drum, another emulating a lead synth and another like a bass guitar. Unfortunately the program again suffers from the constraints of the Amstrad's sound chip and the way the sound can be shaped is quite limited. There will be software available in the future which will do clever things to the sound created by the Amstrad and allow you to modulate and change frequencies, but as this stands there are no filters, and only two types of wave formation, noise and pure tone, are produced. When you create a sound it can be saved for use in other tunes.

Another way the composer can input tunes is by using the **record** module. Here the computer scrolls the stave in real time (4/4, 5/16 or whatever time signature is defined) and the user plays a tune using the Amstrad's keys as a musical keyboard (difficult). This is then remembered and can be played back and edited if you've hit the wrong key somewhere along the line. Unfortunately in this mode the keyboard is monophonic (only one note can be sounded at one time) and to build up a piece containing three tracks requires each track being played separately.

There are three 'resolutions' in the record mode which can be selected: beginner, average and expert. In beginner mode you can only play whole notes, average mode allows half notes and using expert enables any length of note to be input. This means that in the beginner mode there is a far greater margin for error, expert makes the keyboard incredibly sensitive and it's very easy to end up with a really wobbly tune.

The main problem with using this mode is that it takes a lot of practice to get used to the configuration of the keys and also an ability to play a keyboard is essential. If you can't play a keyboard, though, there is always the slower edit mode to fall back on.

There will be three add-on modules available soon after the release of this program. One will allow the program to be interfaced with any dot matrix printer so when a tune is finished the whole thing can be printed out. The second is a form of sequencer which allows any tracks created using *The Music System* to be sequenced into long tunes. The third is a MIDI interface which enables an Amstrad to be able to talk and interact with any MIDI synthesizer.

The Music System certainly looks very exciting and looks like it will far surpass any music utility previously written for the Amstrad, we're all waiting to see the finished product.

The little keyboard echoes the notes as they play.

LOOKING AT TOOLKIT ROMS

Last month GARY LIDDON took a close and admiring look at Arnor's UTOPIA. In this concluding piece he examines Beebugsoft's TOOLKIT and Super Power's PROGRAMMER'S TOOLBOX and then, over a nice cuppa, weighs the various merits of all three.

Beebugsoft are an outfit that originally started as a Beeb only company, selling a number of firmware extensions for the BBC. Now they've branched out onto the Amstrad. *Toolkit* provides 33 extra commands all supplied as RSXs. Unlike *Utopia* or *Programmer's Toolbox* with *Toolkit* it's possible to access a majority of the commands via a more user friendly menu system. To get into the menu you use the **TOOLS** command. This is selected via the keyboard and any further information needed from the user is clearly asked for. Though eventually the commands will rarely be accessed in this way, the menu system is a an easy method of getting acquainted with the extensions that *Toolkit* offers. Also handy is the **HELP** function that displays a list of *Toolkit*'s extensions and the format of any parameters expected after them.

Toolkit's main aim is to offer the BASIC programmer a better environment in which to write and although not actually enhancing Locomotive BASIC that much, it provides the tools necessary for quick and efficient programming. Once you've actually finished, debugged and got a program running, *Toolkit*'s usefulness doesn't end there. The **PACK** command is extremely powerful indeed. On a large program it was possible to shave about 25% of the program size. There are four ways in all that a BASIC program can be shortened. The easiest and most obvious way is to get rid of any REM statements present. Superpower's *Programmer's Toolbox* also has this facility but only *Toolkit* renumbers any GOTOs or GOSUBs that happen to be pointing at the erased line. Using **PACK** superfluous spaces can be stripped from the listing and variable names can be shortened to 2 letter names. The most stunning feature is the way in which lines of text containing just a few commands are crunched into multi-statement lines with all the GOTOs and GOSUBs changed accordingly. The other extensions provided are fairly standard and of good quality. All the usual editor extensions are present including Find, replace and blockmove.

A novel command included offers the ability to redirect the start of BASIC to anywhere in memory. Another feature I have never seen previously on a toolkit is KON command. This allows BASIC to be input in an abbreviated form, rather like BBC BASIC. When you list the program the keywords are expanded back into their normal form so your program's stay compatible with machines without Beebug's *Toolkit*. Keywords are abbreviated with a full stop and a list of commands and their abbreviated forms is included in the manual.

Overall a very proficient ROM indeed and at a cheap price. Not so cheap if you don't own a ROMboard but it should well be worth a look at for those who do.

Oldest of the three ROMs Super Power's *Programmers' Toolbox* is only compatible with the 464. Upon taking a quick squint at the accompanying literature it soon becomes apparent that the ROM was specially designed for the 464 as it provides the new commands supplied with second edition BASIC on the 664 and later machine. Though they are reached via RSXs while the extra functions on the new BASIC are not, it should be possible to convert any 664 BASIC program onto your machine.

As with the other two, *Programmer's Toolbox* supplies extended editing commands for manipulating the BASIC text such as block move and delete plus search and replace functions. The most original and innovative features to come with *PT* are the character editor and soundlab. The character editor allows the character set to be formed into any kind of font you wish. You get into the font editor via the **CHARACTER** command. It has to be suffixed by the ASCII value of the symbol to be edited. Before a character can be changed it must have been moved into RAM with SYMBOL AFTER or you won't be able to edit it. Though the character editor is not particularly astounding, the way it gets the character data into your program is. When you are happy with a redefined character the quit function asks you for a line number. Input this and the character definition is changed into a line of BASIC defining the symbol in question. If you were defining the letter A and wanted the data at line 100, the end result would be something similar to this:

100 SYMBOL 65,0,10,200,255,0,0,126,32

The soundlab works in a similar way as well. Soundlab allows the volume and intonation envelopes to be defined in a user friendly manner. As in the character editor the end result is a line of BASIC placed at your choice of line number. These two functions are extremely powerful indeed and something I've never seen on any other add-on ROM.

Unlike the other two, *PT* also supplies commands specifically for use within BASIC programs. Although promoting incompatibility between different users' machines, you should find the commands fun to mess about with. Mostly the extra functions are of a graphic nature. Circle and Fill are certainly welcome additions to Amstrad BASIC. The fill is a bit more powerful than the average fill command as it can work in conjunction with **MASK**. **MASK** needs a variable one byte long and uses this whenever it draws any lines. If a value other than 255 is given to **MASK** the computer only highlights the pixels that are set within the byte given to **MASK**. If you defined **MASK** to be binary 10101010 (decimal 168) then every other pixel would be plotted. With a bit of twiddling about with the value in **MASK** it's possible to get the most beautiful textured fills.

For the new user using **COMMAND** should be handy. Give this routine a number of a command on *PT* and a detailed help screen appears, detailing both syntax and use of the command in question.

Throughout quite extensive use I found no reason for complaint except for *PT*'s incompatibility with the 664 and 6128. I couldn't see any reason why this should be. The most expensive of the three but probably still worth a look at.

Conclusions

All three ROMs are of a very high standard indeed. I found no bugs or faults in any of them. Though similar products, each have their own strengths and the user should really be sure of what they want before they choose. Out of the three I would go for Arnor's ROM, *Utopia*, mainly because I don't own a ROMboard and it provides the functions that would prove most handy to me. If you do already own a ROMboard, then Beebugsoft's *Toolkit* proves most economical and very handy too. Super Power's *Programmer's Toolbox* is very good too but I feel it's a bit too expensive considering what it offers. But in any event, I would recommend any extensive user to get one of the above three products, as it should enhance your relationship with BASIC no end.

FOR THE AMSTRAD CPC464, CPC664, CPC6128
TOOLKIT
Basic Programmer's Aid
SUPPLIED ON EPROM
BEEBUGSOFT

Arnor Ltd

PROTEXT

FOR AMSTRAD 464/664, 6128

THE ULTIMATE AMSTRAD WORD PROCESSOR!!

PROTEXT is without doubt the most sophisticated word processor you will find on any home micro. It is of comparable standard to business packages costing over £200 but has been developed for the AMSTRAD 464/664 and 6128 machines and is 100% machine-code. We know that PROTEXT is the fastest program of its type currently available (eg global search and replace on a three page file in under a second!). Bearing in mind the range of features included and their ease of use, this package is rightly acclaimed as the No. 1 word processor for Amstrad owners. Compare these features and benchmarks with any other similar products.

BENCHTESTS

A standard file of 775 words (4,785 characters) was used to carry out the following benchtests (all timings are in seconds):

	PROTEXT	TASWORD/AMSWORD
1 LOAD text file	4.7	10.2
2 SAVE text file	4.9	18.9
3 Re-FORMAT paragraph (85 words)	0.4	15.3
4 Re-FORMAT entire text	2.5	Not Possible
5 Move directly to start of text	under 0.1	2.2
6 Move directly to end of text	0.2	2.2
7 REPLACE 'the' with 'THE' (45 occurances)	1.7	34.1
8 SCAN entire text	2.2	7.2
9 MERGE file to centre of text	4.0	Not Possible
10 MERGE file to end of text	3.8	12.4
11 MOVE 85-word paragraph	under 0.1	6.8
12 PROGRAM LOAD TIME DISC ROM	12.9 Instant	14.6 Not Available

PROTEXT FEATURE SUMMARY

File commands – Super fast Load, Merge and Save, Cat, Print (to printer/screen/file).
Cursor Movement – By character/word/line/paragraph/screen, to start or end of line, to start or end of text, to line number, to place marker, to margin.
Inserting and deleting – Insert/overwrite mode, insert character or line, delete character forwards or backwards, delete word.
FIND and REPLACE – Wildcards, all or part of text, case specific, whole word or part of word, find control codes.
Block commands – Move/copy/delete/save/print/format.
Markers – 2 block markers and 10 place markers may be set anywhere.
Formatting – Word wrap, right justify, variable left and right margins.
Ruler lines – Unlimited number of ruler lines to define margins and tabs.
Print options – Headers/footers, page numbers, variable line spacing, variable page length and margin sizes, conditional page throws, odd and even page features, continuous or single sheets, multiple copies.
Printer features – Including emphasised, condensed, double-strike, elite, italics, enlarged, pica, NLQ, subscript, superscript, underline. Built in Epson printer driver. Ability to easily define your own printer driver and save to disc.
Help features – Optional on screen command summaries.
Built in character sets – Danish/French/German/Italian/Spanish/Swedish.
Other features – Non break space, display tabs, returns and hard spaces, soft hyphens, word count, case conversion, copy ruler. 40 page easy to read manual with full index and glossary of terms.

"I AM STUNNED AT PROTEXT — IT KNOCKS POCKET WORDSTAR INTO A COCKED HAT" — AMTIX ISSUE 1 "DON'T MISS IT. IT IS SUPERB" — POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY
"MILES AHEAD OF THE AMSWORD TYPE PROGRAMS" — AMSTRAD USER

NOW TWO POWERFUL NEW ADDITIONS TO YOUR WORD PROCESSING SYSTEM:-

PROSPELL

Checks your spelling!
Proof reads your documents

● **Works directly from PROTEXT** ●

A single command brings the spelling checker into action.

Correct errors while viewing the document.

Add new words to dictionary disc either as they occur or all together for extra speed.

PROSPELL works with all ASCII files from other word processors as well.

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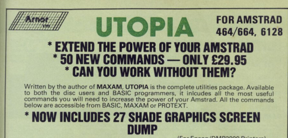
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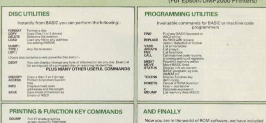
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- **PRINTOFF** Switch off PRINTON

UTOPIA also sets up the function keys to contain useful definitions, eg:-

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CTRL + f1	LIST
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CTRL + f3	CAT
CTRL + f4-f8	. . . etc
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(U and XROM get over the problem of command name duplication)

"A POWERFUL RANGE OF COMMANDS AT A BARGAIN PRICE" — POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY

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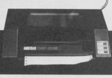
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PUTTING PRINT HEAD TO PAPER



In which we take a look at the output from the latest printer to leave the Amstrad stable, and decide that it's a good deal indeed.

I CAN SEE IT CLEARLY NOW.

I suppose that there are some people in the peripherals industry who were slightly relieved by Amstrad's first printer, the DMP1, which proved that Amstrad can make mistakes. It was a really naff bit of kit that fell well short of the standards set by the Amstrad computers.

Their relief has been short-lived: Amstrad don't waste a great deal of time in putting matters right. The DMP1 has now been replaced by another — the DMP2000 — which has had its light hidden under the proverbial bushel. Introduced about the same time as the two new Amstrad beasts, the 6128 and 8256, the poor little thing did get somewhat overshadowed . .

COLOUR CO-ORDINATED ELEGANCE

The DMP2000 is a smart little beast, decked out in the Amstrad charcoal grey and it looks very professional with its tinted lid. The first thing that strikes one about it, is the large mouth at the front. It's through this mouth that the printer gets its paper, a very different method to that employed by most printers. The switch panel on the front is a little vulgar but it conveniently provides the means to line feed or form feed paper. The platen knob is just under this panel — on the side.

GETTING A RESULT

Apart from making all the right connections, to the wall and computer, (the printer lead is supplied, the mains plug is not) your first task is to get the fabric ribbon to sit quietly — not a difficult task, and it's a good way to get to know the printer's internals intimately. Getting the thing to take a bit of paper is a delight — a simple task, since all printing is performed on a flat bed meaning the paper does not have to curl round a roller. Thick envelopes and the like need no longer be a pain. Single sheet paper is a delight to use, no need to get up and stretch in an undignified manner to reach into the back of a printer — more often than falling inside the thing in the process. Remaining in your seat, you just pick up your paper and shove it into the mouth of the DMP2000. Dignified (for you at least), easy and effective.

If you prefer to use continous tractor feed paper — that's fine — but you might like to take advantage of the beast's little legs which elevate it off the table top, allowing a small stack of paper to be stored underneath. Personally, I prefer to keep my paper stack in a huge box with at least a 1000 sheets — it looks much more impressive. (*Poser — Eds*)

In operation the printer is much more amiable than non-Amstrad printers, simply because it has been designed to accept the Amstrad 7 bit output.

The Amstrad DMP2000 posed tastefully on a bit of old carpet, looks cool though?

As the printout says, this is a bit of the high quality stuff

```
This is an example of High quality output from the DMP2000

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890
!#$%&'()_=#^:{}[]*+:;@,./\<>?'
```



Have a happy new year courtesy of Amtix, Amsoft, Amstrad and a DMP2000.

This means that graphics and text dumps can be obtained with little pain.

WHAT CAN IT DO?

It might be easier to list the functions that the printer can't handle. The DMP2000 has over 130 different styles of type face, you know the sort of thing; enlarged, condensed, italic, double strike, enlarged double strike, emphasised, underline, bold, enlarged bold double strike italic underlined etc etc. One of the most important styles is its NLQ (Near Letter Quality), because that's what most people seem to feel undressed without. All of the print styles produce reasonable quality print; the NLQ mode is not by any means the best, but it is most acceptable. Printers that print characters without descenders aren't very clever (that's when the tail of a 'g' appears in line with the base of an 'a'). This guy produces descenders in all modes. How fast? Quite quick. The speed depends on the print mode you are in but draft rattles out text around 80-100 cps, while the NLQ mode is, as you would expect, slower.

The graphics capabilities are very easy to use, as might be expected from an Amstrad printer. Offering a variety of modes, this printer allows pictures to be built up in different densities, giving a wide variety of shading. The printer 'listens' to Epson control codes when it doing its thing, and consequently it works with most software.

A number of functions can be set to be present when the printer is switched on, by delving inside the casing and altering a few dip switches. Otherwise, everything from paper feed to cancelling the paper out detection can be achieved via software.

OUTRO

All this for a mere £159.95 (£136 for those in the club). By any account the DMP2000 offers very good value and produces output of a reasonable quality. Indeed, this printer is better than reasonable, it is superior to many. If it proves to be as reliable as Amstrad kit in general, anybody on the lookout for a printer, should be shot if they pass this one by. When I say anybody,"I even mean the BBC owners. The DMP2000 will do anyone who wants a Centronics matrix printer a power of good.

HELLO JOHN, GOT A NEW AZIMUTH?

We have had so many people writing with cassette related problems we thought that we had better try and do something about it. We called in Luke (Cerdded dros y byd) Hayter to make a few suggestions.

OPERATION CARETAKER

The care and cleaning kit that keeps your computer operating smoothly.

Loading software in from cassette can be a frustrating activity at the best of times, but when you start getting the dreaded 'Read Errors' you really feel that a divorce is on the cards. Loading problems become common in case of the 664 and 6128 machines, because they have to rely on non-standard cassette units, often connected incorrectly.

Most problems can avoided by following a few simple tips. These apply to all computers that use cassette recorders, either built in or external.

KEEP IT CLEAN!

First, keep the the cassette unit clean. This means dusting the lid every so often to stop dust and dirt from collecting on it and falling into the cassette compartment. Use a cassette head cleaner to remove dirt from the read and write heads inside the cassette unit. Cassette head cleaning kits are available from most shops that sell audio cassettes and while the cleaning cassettes are fine, some people prefer to use cotton buds and clear alcohol (not Gin — buy it from the audio shop) to clean the heads and pinch roller — the little rubber wheel that drives the tape.

If cleaning the head doesn't help try demagnetising it — back to the audio shop and have a chat with the assistant. If you don't demagnetise cassette heads every so often, charge builds up on them which effects the signal response — which can lead to read errors.

If a head cleaner/demagnetiser doesn't solve your problems, check that loading errors occur with a number of tapes and not just one. If at all possible, try your suspect tapes on a friend's machine — if they load OK then your machinery is at fault, if not begin to suspect the tapes themselves. If you find that you only have problems with pre-recorded software, and your own saved programs load every time, then your head is probably out of alignment. Cassette head, that is.

ALIGN, ALIGN

To cure this it is best to by a head alignment kit. For your money you should get a tiny screwdriver and a tape. Play the tape in the cassette unit and tweak the alignment screw accessed through a tiny hole in the casing behind the tape head. WARNING: Remember the initial setting and do NOT fiddle with the azimuth adjustment without reading the alignment kit instructions carefully. It's not a good idea to tamper with the alignment without some sort of kit or expertise: while some experienced people can align a head by ear, others insist that you need an oscilloscope at the very least. Go carefully.

If you alter the alignment so commercially recorded tapes load faultlessly, you may find you now can't load any of your own programs recorded before the alteration. You will have to return the alignment to its original setting, load your program, and then set the alignment to the new, correct, position and resave the program. Do this for each program you wish to use with the new alignment. Be very careful when readjusting the head alignment as the computer will be powered up while you are doing it and if you damage the heads with the screwdriver it will probably have to be professionally repaired.

SHORT AND SAFE

The type of tape you use to record programs and data on is quite important as well. Always use short tapes. It may be possible to fit twenty programs on one tape but the longer the tape, the thinner it is, and the more it will stretch, distorting the signal on the tape. If you save one program onto one tape, the worst that can happen if a tape snags or gets damaged is the loss of one program. Lose a C90 with a dozen programs on it and you'll be really cross! Avoid poor quality tapes — they are a false economy — buy tapes that are recommended for use with computers as they will be of quite a high quality. Amstrads do not like recording data over used tapes, try to clean them first by recording nothing.

The way you store your tapes is also important. Always rewind the tape so that only the leader is visible (the piece of coloured or clear plastic at the beginning), thus ensuring that the magnetic tape will not be damaged or scratched. Do not store your tapes close any power leads as the signal on the tapes can be erased by the magnetic field set up by alternating electric currents. Magnetic fields produced by monitors, tellies and so on spell death to data. Keep them dry and reasonably cool. Moisture can ruin the magnetic coating.

GETTING YOUR OWN

Amstrad 464 owners are fortunate in that their cassette unit is already connected and correctly set up. 664 and 6128 users will need to supply their own cassette unit and, if you didn't by the Amstrad lead, you had better go out and get one of those as well. The first thing to bear in mind about cassette players is that the simpler they are, the better. Generally, stereo units don't work well with computers. Also, try to get a machine that has a separate tone and volume control: these are the first controls to play with if you have any loading problems.

Another problem area for 664 and 6128 users is actually connecting the unit to your computer. If you don't have an Amstrad lead then make sure that everything works as it should. People seem quite happy not to have the cassette controlled by the computer, but for many programs it is vital that the computer is able to stop the flow of data while it does something else. To test this, set the computer up as if it is about to load a program. Turn the tape on and it should not move until you have hit 'any key'.

If you have lead problems you can pop into Tandy's and buy the one that they sell for the Dragon or Tandy computers. Otherwise Currys sell a lead, but this will need some alteration to make the motor control function. One connection often overlooked is the one that goes into the wall! Make sure that it is sound: loose wires in the plug can cause a glitch in the signal.

If you have ROMS connected to your Amstrad remove them or turn them off (some ROMS facilitate this with IROMOFF). One other thing that we have noticed is that some games will not load with a joystick plugged in, we have no idea why, so answers on a postcard please. It would seem a reasonable precaution to unplug any bits and pieces that you don't need before trying to reload a problem program: the joystick can be replaced when the game has loaded.

HINTS, PLEASE

If you have had any specific problems or know some neat dodges to solve them, we would like to hear from you so that we can all benefit from your experiences. In the meantime time, don't be too quick to claim that a game that doesn't load is incompatible. You would be surprised how few incompatible games there are.

REMBRANDT — ART ON THE AMSTRAD

This is the original drawing utensil with which Rembrandt created all his masterpieces back in the 17th century. Some minor modifications have been incorporated such as the non-smelly pixel resolution screen-proof paints to replace the messy oilpaints, the electronic palette which doesn't leave a mess of multi-coloured smudges, and the luminous high resolution screen which makes the easel redundant. The basics are the same: BEEBUGSOFT supplies the utensils, you supply the artistic touch. If only Rembrandt had had the advantage of icons, the history of art might have taken a different course. Who knows . . .

MAIN FEATURES

- Dots & lines
- Elastic lines
- Rectangles
- Circles
- Triangles
- Polygons
- Fill and stipple fill
- Text
- Air brush
- Paint brush
- Magnify any part of the screen
- Cut & paste (Block copy and move)
- Screen scroll one pixel in any direction
- Tape & disc facilities
- Change of palette colours to any of 27 available
- Screen dumps on Amstrad DMP1 or Epson compatible printer
- AND, OR and XOR plotting
- Three cursor speeds

REMBRANDT is an icon driven screen design package compatible with the Amstrad CPC464, CPC664 and CPC6128 computers and works with keyboard or joystick. Screens can be saved to tape or disc and can be printed on the Amstrad printers, or any Epson compatible printer.

After **REMBRANDT** has loaded the screen clears to display a row of icons followed by a row of colour blocks representing the colour palette.

REMBRANDT has 24 icons, of which only 8 are displayed at any one time. Pressing ESC enters the Icon Select mode and pressing TAB displays the next set of Icons on the screen. Using the cursor keys, the select arrow can be moved to the required icon. Pressing SPACE will select the new mode.

REMBRANDT starts up in screen mode 0 which allows a maximum of 16 out of the 27 colours to be used. These 16 colours are displayed beneath the icon row. A small arrow above the palette indicates the currently selected colour. Pressing 1 or 2 moves the arrow left or right through the palette while keys 3 and 4 step the border colour up and down through the complete range of 27 possible colours.

Four ink modes are available, selected via the ink mode icon. Apart from normal mode, which overwrites anything already existing on the screen there is the AND, OR and XOR mode for special effects. The current mode is displayed in the top right corner of the screen.

REMBRANDT works in any of the Amstrad's three screen modes. The screen mode icon must be selected to choose between mode 0 (160 x 200 pixel, 20 x 25 text, 16 colours), mode 1 (320 x 200 pixel, 40 x 25 text, 4 colours) and mode 2 (640 x 200 pixel, 80 x 25 text, 2 colours).

The cursor is controlled with the arrow keys or with the joystick and is used to select commands and to position the drawing utensil on the screen. The pixel speed of the cursor may be set with the grid icon to anything between 1 and 32 pixels per move. A hash sign appears at the top right corner of the screen if a cursor speed other than 1 pixel a move is set. At normal 1 pixel step resolution the speed may be increased by pressing SHIFT or reduced for fine detail work by pressing CTRL. The cursor coordinates may be switched on or off by pressing SHIFT together with TAB. As the whole area of the screen may be used for drawing, the icon and palette display will switch automatically from top to bottom of the screen depending on the position of the cursor. Pressing CTRL and CLR displays the entire screen without any frontend display.

REMBRANDT is a very comprehensive design utility. It is perhaps not as user-friendly as it the icon system could have allowed it to be. Screen operations cannot be performed under total joystick control, as ESC and TAB key presses are required. It would have been nice to see the icon row scroll rather than having to TAB to the other rows. Apart from the actual drawing operation it is best to operate entirely from the keyboard. Speed of operation is not the forte of **REMBRANDT**, but thanks to the three cursor speeds, positioning can be done fairly rapidly.

REMBRANDT is very comprehensive and doesn't seem to lack any important functions. Colour control is extremely easy and fast. The most versatile routine is cut and paste which together with the various ink modes enables a multitude of special effects to be implemented. The fill routine allows stipple filling, which can generate a large range of colour shadings. Other useful features are Magnify for detail work and Scroll, which provides repositioning of the existing screen with wrap-round.

The program structure and the detailed manual enable a fast entry into **REMBRANDT**, and within minutes serious work can be undertaken. At £13.95 for the tape and £16.95 for the disc version **REMBRANDT** is a very good buy.

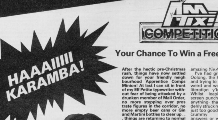
Rembrandt would have loved to have a **REMBRANDT** to doodle with, but he wouldn't have had the powerpoint to plug his Amstrad into . . .

COMMANDS

DOT AND LINE under SPACE control
LINE elastic line fixed with SPACE
RECTANGLE provides a flashing rectangle on the screen which can be moved and altered in size (by pressing COPY and arrow keys) and fixed with SPACE
SOLID RECTANGLE equivalent to RECTANGLE operation
CIRCLE provides a flashing circle on the screen which can be moved and altered in size (by pressing COPY and arrow keys) and fixed with SPACE
SOLID CIRCLE equivalent to CIRCLE operation
TRIANGLE provides a flashing triangle which can be moved and altered (by pressing COPY and the arrow keys) and fixed with SPACE
POLYGON prompts for the number of sides (3 to 16) and displays the polygon, which then may be moved around the screen and altered again using COPY and arrow keys and fixed with the SPACE key.
FILL displays three coloured boxes on the upper righthand side of the screen. The first two boxes show the two colours that make up the stipple, which is displayed in the third box. If a single colour fill is required, the two boxes should contain the same colour. SPACE selects the colour combination. The cursor is positioned within the fill area and SPACE activates the fill. The subsequent prompt Unfill Y/N can correct unsatisfactory results
TEXT (T for text and U for graphics characters) provides an entry line of up to 19 characters. Once ENTERed, the Text line flashes on the screen and can be positioned and fixed using the arrow and SPACE keys.
AIR BRUSH plots a random pattern around the cursor position as long as SPACE is pressed. The size of the spray may be varied with the COPY and arrow keys
PAINT BRUSH allows different width brushes to be used when painting. Again COPY and the arrow keys set the width
GRID changes the number of pixels per step that the cursor moves (1 to 32). If set to a value other than 1, a hash sign appears on the screen as indicator. CTRL and SHIFT do not alter the cursor speed with the hash indicator
MAGNIFY displays a flashing box which can be positioned with the arrow keys. SPACE magnifies the framed portion of the screen by a factor of approximately 8
CUT AND PASTE copies or moves a block to somewhere else on the screen. A flashing box will appear which can be positioned over the area to be copied, and then fixed with SPACE. To copy, the box is then moved to the new position and SPACE draws the copy. To move M is pressed.
SCROLL moves the entire screen picture by one pixel in any of the four directions
SAVE, LOAD and **CATALOGUE** provide the necessary file handling. Two files are saved, one containing details of the screen mode and palette, the other the actual screen information. For loading a Load Data (Y/N) prompt will appear to enquire whether only the screen data is to be loaded.
CHANGE PALETTE allows the change of any colour in the current palette with any of the 27 possible inks available on the computer. Keys 1 and 2 select the colour to be changed. The current colour may be changed by using the left and right arrow keys, which also alter the colour in the second current colour box. SHIFT and arrow keys will displace the second colour, so that the current colour will flash between the two colours set.
SCREEN DUMP dumps any picture to the Amstrad DMP1 or Epson compatible printer. The screen dump is fully shaded.
MODE CHANGE selects any of the three Amstrad screen modes
INK MODES sets any of four possible inking modes. N for NORMAL, A for AND, O for OR and X for Exclusive OR
CLEAR SCREEN clears the screen after proper confirmation
QUIT REMBRANDT returns the computer to Amstrad BASIC

YIE AR KUNG FU COMPETITION





Your Chance To Win a Freebie Game

After the hectic pre-Christmas rush, things have now settled down for your friendly neighbourhood Apprentice Comps Minion! At last I can sit in front of my Elf Petite typewriter without fear of being attacked by a drunken member of Mail Order, no more stepping over prostrate figures in the corridor, no more empty beer cans or Gin and Martini bottles to clear up . . . things are returning to normal at last.

To make up for my horrible last assignment good ol' Unca Jeremy has given me something more interesting to write about. You see, the folks at Imagine, being kindness personified, have decided to give away 50 copies of the game which brought AMTIX! to a standstill last month — the amazing *Yie Ar Kung Fu*.

I've had great fun becoming Oolong, the hero of the game, and trying to beat the wealth of weird and wonderful (that's alliteration y'know) opponents. Whilst leaping around the screen punching and kicking at anything that moved, it suddenly struck me that this game is just too good to be won from a crummy questions-and-answers or wordsquare comp. Oh no, the winners of this game will really have to earn their prize!

Soooo, what you've got to do is get out your crayons and finger paints and design another opponent for Oolong. The opponent can be either sex — after all, females can be pretty mean fighters, just look at the mail order girls! Imagine trying to defeat Auntie Aggie's large, but perfectly formed buffer defence system or Denise's army of 5,000 subscribers!

Yes guy's 'n' gals, it's up to you. It can be freaky like the chaps in editorial — the lumbering Liddon, armed with his deadly beef and mayonnaise sarnie, or sleek and hairless like Rignall who can kill with one blow of his ego! Think of what it would be like trying to tackle the mini might of Masterson . . . your knees would be hacked to shreds before you got anywhere near him. And then there's the Wilde man of advertising with his famous Pink Fighting Snake. (Worn round his neck, before you get the wrong idea . . .)

It's all up to you in yet another 'free 'n' easy' comp from your Apprentice Comps Minion. Once you've designed your opponent send it off to **DANGER: AGGRESSOR IN TRANSIT, AMTIX, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.** to reach us by February 28th. A word of warning: those who don't put AMTIX! on the envelope will have a visit from our mail sorters. Newsfield will not be held responsible for their actions.





This month's column will attempt to revert to something approaching normality after Michael Jampel's essay last issue. If you enjoyed his article, please let me know. Michael is ready to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and spiel some more on other matters military. This month, there's a product simply called *The War Game* by Reelax. In the way of a preview howevr, I'll also take a look at some Lothlorien titles expected to arrive on the Amstrad over the next couple of months. The version looked at here are from completed Spectrum games, but the nature of the games should mean the only differences on the Amstrad will be aesthetic ones.

If anybody out there feels that a certain area of strategy gaming should be dealt with specifically or if you just wish to express your views on the Strategy column and wish to contribute ideas, apply ink to paper (preferably via a nib) and let me hear from you. Right then. On with the show.

THE WAR GAME

Reelax, £8.95, cass



This is the first time I've encountered Reelax and *The War Game* seems to be one of a collection of abstract strategy games by them. I hope to have a look at the others in future. The game comes very tastefully packaged in a medium sized black box with silver ink displaying the title above an image of what appears to be an eighteenth century cavalry officer. Inside is an introductory leaflet which explains the rules in a most satisfactory manner. Novice players would find them straightforward enough.

To the game then. The idea is to fight a battle between one or two players (an important note here: although the instructions mentioned a one player version, I could not get this option to work) based on a Napoleonic rules system. Units are either English or French. Unit types are infantry, cavalry, headquarters, artillery and engineers. Infantry units vary in size.

After difficulty level and morale have been set, an option on the type of battlefield to be used is allowed. Plains, rivers and forest are the choices open to the players. The resulting battlefield is created automatically and then players are asked to take turns to go away from the screen (and put a brew on, perhaps) while the other deploys his forces. One player will be given the top half of the screen, the other may use the lower part. After forces have been deployed, they disappear while the other player takes his setup turn.

Next, the game itself begins. All the forces are now displayed on the map and the action takes place in turns. Each unit (displayed as a redefined character square which is highlighted when selected) may be moved one square at a time. However, to reflect the fact that different units move at different speeds, some may be selected more than others. If any are in range of an enemy unit at the end of movement, the option is given to attack. Artillery may make ranged fire, up to four squares away. When this procedure is completed, the second play repeats the process. Other options included in this section include the ability to relocate headquarters and order the engineers detachment to build bridge, clear forest or move.

Attacks are handled in a rather interesting manner. In windows situated on opposite sides of the screen, both units involved in an engagement are shown with small characters each representing twenty five troops. As casualties are inflicted on a unit, the number of figures is depleted. At the end of an engagement, total losses are shown numerically at the bottom of the screen.

Between moves, both players may receive a battlefield report showing each unit, its current strength and level of moral. Useful for a comparison of forces and an 'at a glance' overview of your force's progress.

The object of the game is to destroy your opponent's HQ. There are no victory conditions other than this one. If neither side gains victory by nightfall, the battle is a draw. This is a major drawback. Even though it is a game based on strategy and tactics as an abstract concept rather than simulation, there should be flexibility in play and this technique leaves very little. It is also the first of many other major flaws.

Units may only move and fire in four directions. The complexity of putting eight directions in would not have been great and this limits the arc of fire or line of sight idea prevelant in most wargames. Units may move through an enemy zone of control or even remain there and yet opt not to engage in combat. Despite the presence of morale, there seemed to be no retreat penalty for units beaten in combat. If units were asked to fight their own troops, the banal 'Missed!' message appeared.

But there were worse things. Although there should have been an option to move HQ, and this did appear on the screen at the right time, it would not respond to a positive input. Captured artillery units could not be put to use by an opponent. In fact, there was nothing but a very basic and limited strategy game on the screen. The sound effects were sometimes amusing but after a while even they became annoying. This can only be viewed as a total beginners game. It could have been a lot better with little more effort.

Presentation 64%
Graphics 41%
Complexity 23%
Authenticity 21%
Lastability 25%
Overall 34%

WATERLOO

The packaging of Lothlorien's products has certainly improved since the early days. *Waterloo* comes beautifully packaged in a large format cassette holder with excellent artwork and a slim but excellent manual which many conventional wargames companies would do well to examine before they released their next title.

The game is a strategic simulation on divisional level of the battle that finally brought Napoleon to his downfall. Napoleon was on his way to Brussels to gain support for his forces from Brussels. However, he must first defeat the Anglo-Dutch force commanded by the Duke of Wellington from the Seventh Coalition. Napoleon had a stronger force than his opponent but Wellington had superb defensive positions that cut across his adversary's front lines. Plus, he knew that if he fought a defensive strategy long enough, reinforcements would soon arrive in the form of General Blucher's Prussian army. And so the stage is set for a one player game with the human participant playing Napoleon.

The game has a smooth scrolling 'plan' of the battlefield as a display. The scrolling really is smooth on this game — far superior to other games of this nature that boast the same feature. Units are displayed as divisional markers, each unit coloured according to nationality. Displayed on the markers is information pertaining to the nature of the unit such as whether it is cavalry or infantry. On the French units the Corps number and command status is also shown. On requesting a detailed report of a unit, the marker widens to twice its original length and the unit's strength in terms of fighting men and its morale are displayed. On enemy units however, only the strength is displayed.

Handling the units is accom plished by using a straightfor ward mini-menu at the bottom of the display area in conjunction with cursor control. Units can be commanded as a Corps (by giving a general command to the leading division) or individually. It's possible to alter the level of difficulty of the game by varying the number of unit orders that may exist simultaneously. Units may actually leave their set positions to follow commanding units if they leave the immediate vicinity.

One of the interesting features of the game is the way a unit may be prevented from achieving its orders because of enemy resistance (or maybe just presence) but after the threat is passed, the unit will continue on its original course of action. This isn't a totally original feature to computer wargaming but rarely is it used so realistically. One up for Lothlorien.

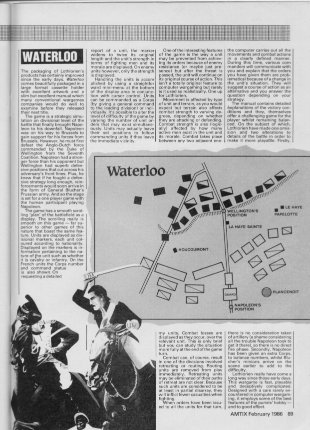
Movement is affected by type of unit and terrain, as you would expect but terrain also affects combat strength to varying degrees, depending on whether they are attacking or defending. Combat strength is also (logically) affected by how many active men exist in the unit and its morale. Combat takes place between any two adjacent enemy units. Combat losses are displayed as they occur, over the relevant unit. This is only brief but you can study the situation more fully at the end of the game turn.

Combat can, of course, result in one of the divisions involved retreating or routing. Routing units are removed from play immediately. Retreating units may be eliminated of their paths of retreat are not clear. Because such units are considered to be at least in partial disarray, they will inflict fewer casualties when fighting.

When orders have been issued to all the units for that turn, the computer carries out all the movements and combat actions in a clearly defined manner. During this time, various com manders will communicate with you and explain that the orders you have given them are problematical because of a change in the unit's situation. They will suggest a course of action as an alternative and you answer the question depending on your strategy.

The manual contains detailed explanations of the victory conditions and they, themselves offer a challenging game for the player whilst remaining balanced. On the subject of which, Lothlorien have made one omission and two alterations to details of the battle in order to make it more playable. Firstly, there is no consideration taken of artillery (a shame considering all the trouble Napoleon took to get it there), so there is no direct fire phase. Secondly, Napoleon has been given an extra Corps, to balance numbers, whilst Blucher's minions arrive on the scene earlier to add to the difficulty.

Lothlorien really have come a long way since those early days. This wargame is fast, playable and deceptively complicated. Designed with a care rarely encountered in computer wargaming, it employs some of the best features of the purists' hobby — and to good effect.





STRATEGY

AUSTERLITZ



Imagine a cold December morning in 1807. Around 150,000 men are gathered on the field of battle before some of the most powerful leaders of Europe — and you have *Austerlitz*, Lothlorien's successor to *Waterloo* in their solo Warmaster series.

The packaging for *Austerlitz* is the same 'video case' affair that graced their previous effort. Inside the beautiful case, there's the usual manual and cassette. I was given photostats of the manual pages, as the finished booklet has not yet gone to print. However, as with *Waterloo*, the finished instructions will be in a slim, glossy A5 size booklet. In fact, much of the layout and text has been lifted from the previous game, as both use the same rules system.

The manual provides all the details on the mechanics of play, historical notes to accompany the game itself and character sketches of Napoleon's Corps Commanders (a brilliant idea which unfortunately couldn't be incorporated in *Waterloo*). All the instructions are clear and concise and within minutes of reading them you should be able to begin the game.

Austerlitz has three levels of difficulty. The first is a training level to allow you to become accustomed to the game. If you are familiar with the system (as I was after playing *Waterloo* for ages), this level fails to provide serious competition. However, do not under-estimate the difficulty of other levels. The second is the standard game which takes some time to achieve a good result on, but the third alters some of the setup conditions pertaining to the efficiency of the Austro-Russian forces (otherwise known as the computer), in order to create a very difficult situation for the French.

Once the game level has been selected, the battlefield is displayed. This is approximately four times the size of the screen display and can be viewed by scrolling with the cursor keys (making use of a scrolling routine that would grace many an arcade game, at that). The player's units (French) are displayed in blue whilst the Austro-Russians are shown in yellow. Terrain features are simply, but adequately defined and the only new feature is the frozen lake — a nasty affair which should be avoided at all costs (unless you can force the enemy onto it).

Many of the other details of the game come directly from its predecessor; infantry and cavalry actions only; terrain effects on movement; unit display and movement and combat procedure. Units are displayed as character blocks with crossed swords for cavalry and a rifle for infantry. Whether or not they are Commanders is also shown, as is the Corps they belong to. If desired, unit strength and morale may be shown (although strength only is revealed for enemy units). Combat is automatic, given that one or more units have entered an enemy zone of control (one adjacent character block on any facing from an enemy unit).

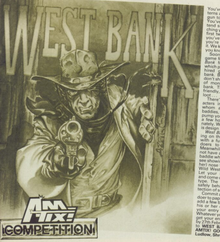
One of the interesting ideas employed in the game is the use of limited intelligence. This is to simulate the early mists that clung to the battlefield on that December morning and added so much confusion to the battlefield. After the first turn, only those units spotted by your advanced units or those encountered before combat, are revealed. Otherwise, during the computer's turn, 'blank squares' may be seen to begin to move to simulate partial awareness of the Austro-Russian dispositions. Otherwise, you're in the dark.

Game turns consist of giving orders to all your units and then entering them in one command, to the computer. Before entering your command sequence, moves for any unit may be changed at will. French movement and combat sequences follow, after which the computer's turn takes place using the same format. It's during your movement phase that various Corps commanders may offer alternative courses of action. Indeed it may be the case that they are more fully aware of the situation in that area than you, and to begin with, their advice is extremely useful. In more sophisticated games, however, be sure to read the character sketches from the manual. On one occasion, a commander who had been involved in very heavy fighting was down to his last five hundred men when he suggested that rather than retreat to a nearby hill, as I had ordered, he could intercept a 6,000 man infantry unit. On checking the notes, they referred to him as 'incapable of individual command' but 'personally brave: wounded 34 times in combat'.

The game looks almost identical to its predecessor and its aesthetic features are deliberately so. But as with all good wargames, the subtleties of the game are vastly different. *Austerlitz* plays well and makes an excellent addition to *Waterloo*.

SO YOU THINK YOU COULD BE A CRACK SECURITY GUARD?

Twenty five comfy WEST BANK sweatshirts up for grabs in Gremlin Graphics' "Design a Baddie" competition



You've watched all those Westerns and sympathised with the gun totin' sheriff, haven't you?. You've run around with a pretend six shooter made by clenching your fist and pointing your first two fingers. "Bang, Bang" you've shouted, "Gotcha — you're dead". Don't try to deny it. We know all your secrets here you know, yes we do!

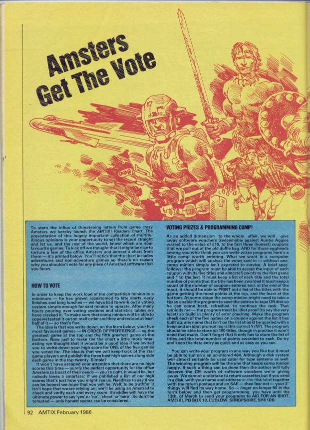
Soon you'll be able to play the game for nearly real, with *West Bank* from Gremlin Graphics, which puts you in the hot seat as hired gun in a frontier-town bank. Blow away the baddies, don't shoot the goodies and lots of money gets paid into the bank. Then the manager gets friendly, and you earn lots of loot . . .

There's a whole stack of characters in the game, some of whom are real out and out baddies, itching and twitching to pump you full of lead. There are a few honest dudes too, fortunately. What we'd like you to do is design another baddie.

West Bank should be appearing on the Amstrad very soon, with a full complement of evil doers to take pot shots at. Meanwhile, while you wait, why not have a go at dreaming up a baddie who you might expect to see showing his (or maybe even her) nose through the door of a Wild West Banking emporium. Let your imagination run riot and come up with a real criminal type. The kind who should be safely behind bars for the protection of society (and banks).

Commit a portrait of your evildoer to paper — you may wish to add a few biographical notes on his or her career just to round your entry off. It's up to you. Whatever you do, do it NOW and get your entry into the postbox by 27th February. Criminal types to **WEST BANK BADDIES C/O AMTIX! GOODIES, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB.**

Amsters Get The Vote



To stem the influx of threatening letters from game crazy Amsters we hereby launch the AMTIX! Readers Chart. The presentation of this hugely important collection of multitudinous opinions is your opportunity to set the record straight and let us, and the rest of the world, know which are your favourite games. To kick off we thought that it might be nice to torture a few of the office Amsters and extract a chart from them — it's printed below. You'll notice that the chart includes adventures and non-adventure games so there's no reason why you shouldn't vote for any piece of Amstrad software that you fancy.

HOW TO VOTE

In order to keep the work load of the competition minion to a minimum — he has grown accustomed to late starts, early finishes and long lunches — we have had to work out a voting system simple enough for said minion to operate. After many hours pouring over voting systems and statistics tables we have cracked it. To make sure that comp minion will be able to copewetested it outon mail order and they understood at least half of it — so that's fine.

The idea is that you write down, on the form below, your five most favoured games — IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE — eg the greatest game at the top and the fifth greatest game at the bottom. Now just to make the the chart a little more interesting we thought that it would be a good idea if we invited you to write down your high score for ONE of the five games you voted for. The idea is that we will keep track of the star game players and publish the three best high scores along side each game in the top twenty. Simple?

It won't have escaped your attention that there are no high scores this time — surely the perfect opportunity for the office Amsters to boast of their deeds — you're right, it would be, but nobody loves a smartass; if we published a list of our high scores that's just how you might see us. Needless to say if we can be honest we hope that you will be. Well, to be truthful it isn't hope that weare relying on: we'll be using an Amstrad to check and verify each and every score. Straddles will have the ultimate power to say 'yes' or 'no'; 'cheat' or 'hero'. So don't be tempted — only honest scores can be considered.

VOTING PRIZES & PROGRAMMING COMP!

As an added dimension to the whole affair, we will give away software vouchers (redeemable against Auntie Aggies wares) to the value of £10, to the first three (honest) coupons that we pull out of the old duffle bag. AND for those eggheads among you who think you can write wizzo programs here's a little comp worth entering. What we want is a computer program which will analyse the votes sent in — without one, comp minion simply isn't expected to survive. A brief spec. follows: the program must be able to accept the input of each coupon with its five titles and allocate 5 points to the first game and 1 to the last. It must keep a list of each title and the total number of points that the title has been awarded It must keep a count of the number of coupons entered and, at the end of the input, it should be able to PRINT out a list of the titles with the game getting the most points at the top, and the least at the bottom. At some stage the comp minion might need to take a kip so enable the program to save the entries to tape OR disk so he can come back, refreshed, to continue the task. That reminds me — the program must be idiot proof (to say the very least) so build in plenty of error checking. Make the program check each of the five names on a coupon against the list it has built up, any name that isn't on the list should be queried with a beep and an idiot prompt (eg is this correct Y/N?). The program should be able to store up 100 titles, though in practice it won't need that many. Don't forget that it only has to store the list of titles and the total number of points awarded to each. Do try and keep the data entry as quick and as easy as you can.

You can write your program in any way you like but it must be able to run on a an un-altered 464. Although a disk system will almost certainly be used cater for tape systems as well. The winning program will be the one that keeps comp minion happy. If such a thing can be done then the author will fully deserve the £35 worth of software vouchers we're giving away. We cannot undertake to return cassettes but if you send in a disk, with your name and address on the disk label together with the return postage and an SAE — then fear not — your 3" thingy will find its way home. So — linger no longer fill in the form below and then get programming, you have until the 13th. of March to send your programs to AID FOR AN IDIOT, AMTIX!, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB



AMTIX! TOP TWENTY FOR FEBRUARY

1. **Highway Encounter** Vortex
2. **Finders Keepers** Mastertronic
3. **Yie Ar Kung Fu** Imagine
4. **Spy vs Spy** Beyond
5. **TLL** Vortex
6. **Noterraqueous** Mastertronic
7. **Sorcery Plus** Amsoft
8. **Knight Lore** Ultimate
9. **Bruce Lee** US Gold
10. **Locomotion** Mastertronic
11. **Red Moon** Level 9
12. **Marsport** Gargoyle
13. **Cauldron** Palace
14. **Dynamite Dan** Mirrorsoft
15. **Hacker** Activision
16. **Alien 8** Ultimate
17. **3D grand Prix** Amsoft
18. **Chimera** Firebird
19. **Way of the Exploding Fist** Melbourne House
20. **Cyrus II 3D Chess** Amsoft

AMTIX! READERS TOP TWENTY CHART VOTING FORM

The World's five hippest games in order of preference are:
TITLE

1 ....

2 ....

3 ....

4 ....

5 ....

the five games above select one and give us your high score:

TITLE ....

ACHIEVEMENT ....

Please write in CAPS in an eyestrain free manner.

Name ....

Address ....

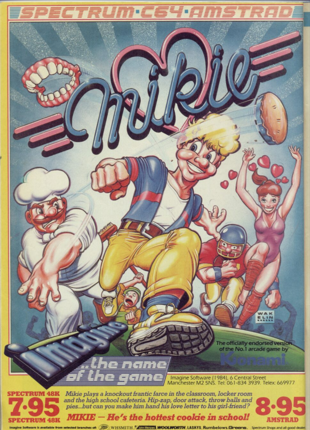
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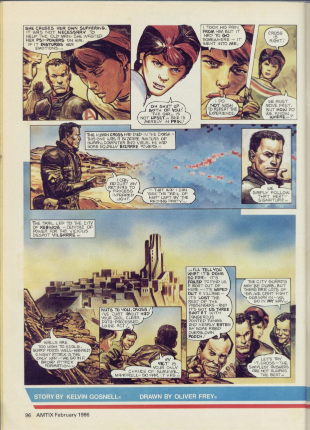
.... Postcode ....

My machine is a 464/664/6128/8256 (delete as applicable)
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SPECTRUM 48K
Mikie plays a knockout frantic farce in the classroom, locker room and the high school cafeteria. Hip-zap, door attack, throw balls and pies...but can you make him hand his love letter to his girl-friend?
MIKIE — He's the hottest cookie in school!
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AMSTRAD
Imagine Software is available from selected branches of: Boots, WHSMITH, John Menzies, WOOLWORTH, LASKYS, Rumbelows, Greens, Spectrum Shops and all good dealers


Update:
Location: Dyson Sphere solar system: Co-ordinates unknown. Subjects: Crash survivors from Starliner 'Arcadia'.
Objective: Return crash survivors to Earth.
Method: Find and activate alternate space vessel. Result: Invalid method: No vessel available.
Next: Cross fingers: Get lucky. . .
THE TERMINAL MAN
AS CROSS, JIN AND MANDRELL RETURNED AFTER THEIR UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH FOR A SHIP, THE 'LUCK' PROGRAM LOOKED TO BE BADLY BUGGED,,,
IT'S GONE BAD, CROSS, THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG,,,
SOMEONE OR SOMETHING HAS BEEN HERE —
BUT ONLY THE NATIVE VILLAGERS ARE HERE, NO SIGN OF ANY PASSENGERS,,,
ONLY ONE VILLAGER WAS STILL ALIVE — JUST,,,
VILGARRE'S HORDES CAME — KILLED US,,, TOOK YOUR PEOPLE — UGH — PAIN TERRIBLE — B-BUT HAD TO HOLD ON — TELL YOU,,,
YOUR PAIN IS OVER, OLD FRIEND — I CAN TAKE IT FROM YOU,
IT-IT IS GONE, BUT HOW,,? YOU ARE A HEALER?
NO — I CAN ONLY STOP YOUR SUFFERING, I CANNOT SAVE YOU — I WISH MY POWERS WERE STRONGER BUT,,,
YOU ARE DOING ENOUGH, DO NOT REGRET, I DO NOT REGRET DYING, I ONLY REGRET ONE THING — I WOULD DEARLY LOVED TO HAVE SEEN THIS STARSHIP THAT YOU SEEK,,,
— JUST ONCE BEFORE I,,,
,,,DIE —
CROSS
COME — THE OLD MAN'S DATA WAS VALUABLE, WE MUST MOVE QUICKLY TO FOLLOW THE TRAIL —
SWITCH IN THE COMPASSION CIRCUITS COMPUTER MAN! THE GIRL'S UPSET,,,



SHE CAUSES HER OWN SUFFERING, IT WAS NOT NECESSARY TO HELP THE OLD MAN, SHE WASTED HER PSI-POWERS ON HIM, IF IT DISTURBS HER EMOTIONS...
OH SHUT UP BOTH OF YOU! THE GIRL IS NOT UPSET... SHE IS MERELY IN PAIN!
I TOOK HIS PAIN FROM HIM BUT IT HAD TO GO SOMEWHERE — IT WENT INTO ME,
I DO NOT WISH TO REPEAT THE EXPERIENCE,
CROSS IS RIGHT!
WE MUST MOVE FAST, BUT HOW DO WE KNOW WHERE...?
THE HUMAN CROSS HAD DIED IN THE CRASH — THIS ONE WAS A BIZARRE MIXTURE OF HUMAN, COMPUTER AND VIRUS, HE HAD SOME EQUALLY BIZARRE POWERS...
I CAN ADJUST MY RETINAS TO PROCESS INFRARED LIGHT,
— THAT WAY I CAN 'SEE' THE TRAIL OF HEAT LEFT BY THE RAIDING PARTY...
WE SIMPLY FOLLOW THAT HEAT-SIGNATURE...
THE TRAIL LED TO THE CITY OF KEBWOB — CENTRE OF POWER FOR THE VICIOUS DESPOT VILGARRE...
WALLS ARE TOO HIGH TO SCALE, GUARD POSTS WELL-MANNED, A NIGHT ATTACK IS THE ONLY WAY — WE GO IN A BROAD ATTACK FORMATION...
NUTS TO YOU, CROSS! I'VE JUST ABOUT HAD YOUR COOL CLEAR DATA-PROCESSED LOGIC ACT!
MY 'ACT' IS YOUR ONLY CHANCE OF SURVIVAL, MANDRELL — SO FAR IT HAS...
...I'LL TELL YOU WHAT IT'S DONE SO FAR: IT'S FAILED TO FIND US A BOAT OUT OF HERE — IT'S WIPED OUT A VILLAGE — IT'S LOST THE REST OF THE PASSENGERS — AND IT'S GOT US THREE SHOT AT WITH DANGEROUS POINTED THINGS AND NEARLY EATEN BY SOME RABID OVERBLOWN POOCH!
THE CITY GUARDS MAY BE DUMB, BUT THERE ARE LOTS OF 'EM, WE CAN'T FIGHT OUR WAY IN — WE GO IN MY WAY...
LET'S TRY IT, CROSS — THE SIMPLEST ANSWERS ARE NOT ALWAYS THE BEST...
STORY BY KELVIN GOSNELL©
DRAWN BY OLIVER FREY©


VERY WELL — EXPLAIN!
JUST KEEP 'EM TALKING, CONFUSE THEIR LEADER — YOU'LL FIND IT EASY...
ENTRY TO THE CITY IS FORBIDDEN WITHOUT PAPERS!
BUT WE COME SEEKING A HEALING MAN FOR OUR FRIEND THERE...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM — IS IT CATCHING...?
NO, NO. HE IS JUST SIMPLE IN THE HEAD — WANTS TO PLAY GAMES ALL DAY LONG. HUMOUR HIM — HE'S NOT VIOLENT...
WHICH ONE?
WHICH ONE WHAT?
WHICH ONE'S GOT THE COIN UNDER IT?
THAT ONE — SAW YOU PUT IT THERE!
WRONG!
'ERE — THAT'S A BIT CLEVER —
BET YOU CAN'T DO IT AGAIN!
I'LL BET THIS TRINKET AGAINST THAT BELT OF YOURS THAT I CAN —
YOU'RE ON, IDIOT!
THIS REALLY IS QUITE AN INTERESTING GAME — I'LL BET YOU A GOLDEN VILG...!
MONEY! YOU DARE OFFER ME MONEY! ONLY THE FINEST BELT WILL DO — I HAVE THE FINEST COLLECTION OF BELTS IN THE LAND AND YOU OFFER ME MONEY!
INDULGE THE POOR SOUL, GENERAL...
WE HOPE TO GET HIS ECCENTRICITIES CURED SOON,
VERY WELL — MY MEN ARE ENJOYING THE SPECTACLE. CONTINUE...


BY THE GREAT RELIC! HE'S WON AGAIN!
O.K. FOLKS! SHOW'S OVER...
EH?
THANK YOU FOR AN AMUSING HALF HOUR, GENTLEMEN — I HOPE WE NEVER MEET AGAIN.
WHAT? I DON'T UNDERSTAND, I HAVE NOT GIVEN PERMISSION...
STOP THEM!
OH, I WOULDN'T TRY THAT, CORPORAL!
SHE TOLD YOU NOT TO TRY IT!
NOW I THINK YOU WILL AGREE THAT THAT WAS EASIER THAN STEAMING IN WITH ALL GUNS FIRING, MR CROSS.
DEFINITELY— BUT THERE WAS NO GUARANTEE IT WOULD WORK, THE PROBABILITY FACTOR WAS...
STUFF YOUR PROBABILITY FACTOR, CROSS! HUMAN NATURE MADE IT A DEAD CERT, WE JUST PROVED THE EXISTENCE OF HUMAN GREED, AND FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH JIN PROVED SOMETHING ABOUT COMPASSION WHEN SHE HELPED THE OLD MAN—
SO WHY DON'T YOU TRY SOME, EH?
I BELIEVE YOU MAY BE RIGHT, MANDRELL — HUMAN NATURE MAY BE OF GREAT VALUE IN FINDING OUR PASSENGERS.
OH, I DON'T BELIEVE IT! HE'S GOT TO HAVE A NICE BINARY PURPOSE FOR EVERYTHING!
IT DOESN'T MATTER, MANDRELL, LOOK— HE SMILED...
YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT, JIN —
— I DO BELIEVE THERE'S A LITTLE BIT OF HUMANITY LEFT INSIDE OUR TERMINAL MAN!
Next: Ritual of Purification...


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